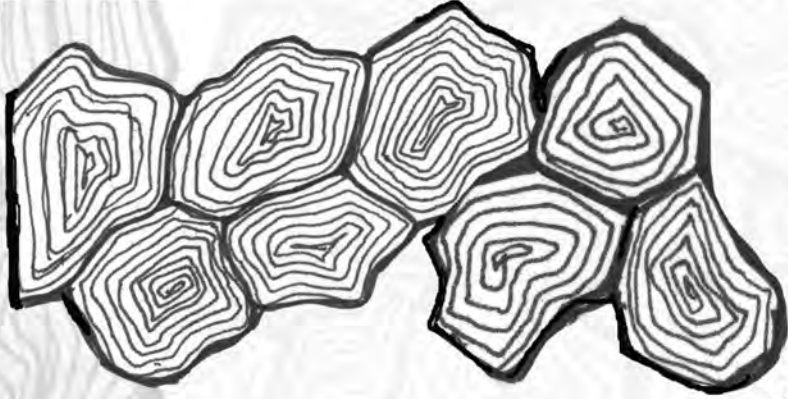


2017



60th ANNIVERSARY



INSCAPE

Art & LITERARY MAGAZINES



2017



IN-SCAPE (N)

The essential, distinctive, and
revolutionary quality of a thing:
“Here is the inscape, the epiphany,
the moment of truth.”

-Madison Smartt Bell



inscape
art & literary magazine

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Kristin Busby
Michael Hutchinson
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CONTENTS

POETRY

M. Anthony C.	Hello Human 8
	Pillow: a seduction 10
	Piñata 10
	Stir 12
Torianne Crouch	Climax 14
	Toy Sonnet..... 14
Amber Shayde Deaton	A Bullet on the Stairs 16
	From the Oil Painted Barn 17
Veronica Gollihue	Mind 19
Michael Hutchinson	Her god 22
	Sentinel..... 23
	On the backs of bulls 24
Michael Jarvi	Burning Bush..... 26
	Jessica as a Song..... 26
	Jessica on a Balcony in Louisville 28
	The Crucifixion 28
Chelsea Mayse	Delilah..... 31
	Salt 32
	The Difference..... 34
Avram McCarty	Automaton..... 35
	Mamihlapinatapei..... 37
Kassandra Neltner	La Lágrima..... 37
	The Tear..... 38
John Secor	The High Dive 40
	House for Sale..... 41

Cailin Wile	kitten, continued	44
	on leaving and you	46
	crossing over, finding love	
	where you began	48

FICTION

Lee Blevins	Coming Downer	51
Misty Skaggs	The Taste of Caviar	59
	Vegetables	63
Liana Joy Spurrier	The Anatomy of the Pencil	66
	Dust	69
	Sunday	82
Elizabeth Von Mann	Cramps	86

NONFICTION

Tanya Mederos-Coffey	Narrative on Life	97
	Water	99
Elizabeth Von Mann	A Prayer Circle	100

VISUAL ART

Betty Morris	Breaking Free	7
Kristin Busby	World Without End	9
Lauren Eastep	The Pursuit of Spirituality	11
Christopher Burton	Dark Field	13
Michael Hutchinson	Mortality	15
James Mersieria Davidson	Drowning	20-21
Samantha Smallwood	Student Lost in Work	25
Taylor Brown	Patience	27
Sarah Lunsford	Haunted Staircase	30
Gloria Corona-Luna	Bubbly	33

Kristin Busby	Wax and Wane	36
Dakota Johnson	Ascension	39
Kristin Howell	Untitled IV	42
	Untitled VII	43
Lydia Clay	Relationship Abuse	45
Lauren Eastep	One Hour Study	50
Mardy Wells	The Forest	53
Heather Milby	Cross Lake	56
Elyssia Lowe	Out With Smoke	58
Rian Penman	Iris	61
Bethany Pace	Smoke	64
Waylan Coffey	Candlewax	67
Hanna Mills	Capsized	70
Dakota Johnson	Emasculation	73
Stefany Moran	Sight	77
Larissa Beauchamp	E/Merge 02	81
Kristin Gunn	S1020	84
Bethany Crouch	Rebirth	87
Nicholas Hunt	Wood-fired Vase	90
Darcy McDaniel	Joyce	93
Betty Morris	Imprisoned	96
Alex Virostko	Focus on Texture	98
Lin-hsiu Huang	Taiwan will Touch Your Heart.....	101
Daniel Edie	Experience 20	104
Daniel Edie	Experience 21	105

BIOGRAPHIES

Art and Literary Biographies	106
------------------------------------	-----

FOR EKLUND

As the wind blows
the branches rustle
and make beautiful music in the night.
The breeze won't know its part
in this symphony of nature
but the branches sing all the same.

If mountains had twice the soul
if the wind sang twice as loud
they would still fall short
of the inspiration a kind poet offers.

You brought our minds to the brink of profound thought,
and then shouted to us, "Jump off."
When we jumped, yet did not fall,
but rose instead to the heavens,
you marveled from afar,
and cheered us on.

You told me to run
with the wild girls
and they showed me
the scariest and most
beautiful of things.

And so for teaching us to write
with apparatuses that yield
our most important works.
For reflection and support
within a fortress of words,
and inspiring a group of vulnerable writers,
bravely wielding pens,
to form a community of everlasting friends.

We thank you.



Betty Morris
Breaking Free
Digital Photograph
First Place Award

POETRY

M. Anthony C.
Hello Human

I see you looking at me
and am quite pleased by it.
Truly I am, because ever since I got down here
I've been a swimming pool for muddy particles
that keep trying to dissolve,
but I've successfully sunk them down
via density and have stilled.

You are quite lovely you know,
how about I paint a picture of you,
your curly brown hair and rain jacket,
your yellow galoshes.
Your red lips curling, hair rising
and slowly sinking down,
the tread on your—
Wait! Can't we—



Kristin Busby
World Without End
Digital Collage
Second Place Award

M. Anthony C.

Pillow: a seduction

You know that I am the one for you,
I who fall from your bed
to the floor every night.
How often have you cried
on hard shoulders?
How often have you cried into me?

When you weren't sure how to initiate the kiss,
I became your actress,
your red-headed dream girl
who wouldn't say good-bye.
I became those downy lips you touched
in practice, reality, sleep,
the ones you pined after 18 months,
and we all know how that turned out.

M. Anthony C.

Piñata

i.
Finally collapsed,
excised of adverse sweets
the rope blanketing me
as the candle fire.
My pasted words and latex
shell double-membrane,
falling in at last.

ii.
Finally collapsed,
no longer an indiscernible ass.



Lauren Eastep
The Pursuit of Spirituality
Digital Illustration
Third Place Award

M. Anthony C.

Stir

I was surprised when you said
that you wanted to make me
French hot chocolate.
I invited you over that night.
You didn't want anything to eat
so I wrapped my arm like steam around
your shoulder and,

just for fun, flipped your earlobe.
"Is that what you were looking for?"
You chuckled, snuck
your fingers to my side
and tickled me! Stirring something
inside me that I thought was solid.
Laughing,

falling apart smoothly,
 consistently, as you
poured over me your warm stare
topped with marshmallows for taste.



Christopher Burton

Dark Field

Long Exposure Digital Photograph
Honorable Mention

Torianne Crouch

Climax

Open my mind, open my heart
Leave myself open to your touch
Push your way inside of me
Tear through these walls of mine
Ease this pain deep within my soul
Erase the memories he left inside
Bring me full circle in your arms
But hang with me – at the climax of life

Torianne Crouch

Toy Sonnet

Rusty springs poke from under plastic shells,
Painted eyes scratched from once perfect faces,
Shapeless clothing, you can no longer tell,
Scattered limbs lie in forgotten places.
These are the toys you no longer care for,
The ones lost at the bottom of the bin,
Broken to bits and easy to ignore,
No longer what they once had been.
Each broken apart in its own right,
Pieces lost, never to be seen again,
But together they have learned to fight,
Together they have learned to stand again.
Shouting in a single voice all their own,
“Now we are not alone, never alone.”



Michael Hutchinson

Mortality

Silver Gelatin Print

Honorable Mention

Amber Shade Deaton

A Bullet on the Stairs

A bullet fell from my pocket when we returned from the range
Dad always handled the ammunition
I didn't mean to bring it home
Or for it fall on my steps
But since it fell, I've left it there
Eventually I'll hand it over
When I get the time

There is no lock or key
No parent to hide it away from me
It's been days, maybe weeks
If mom asks I don't know how it got there

I'm waiting for them to notice
It's engraved in my heel each time I lap the stairs
My ploy is proving my original notion
It glistens in the fucking light
Epically on cold night when I crawl to my bed
That 22. cloaked in gold and better places
Catching my contemplation, begging for a bullseye

I know it cannot hurt me, only I hurt myself
I'll hand it over to parent A or B
Stop trying to play a mind game with the unaware

It's been there forever
Lap after crawl
I lay on the blue gray carpet and stare
It's wiggled into the fibers
Made its way into my routine
No one questions me
Now it's in my hand
Soon to be in my head

Amber Shade Deaton
From The Oil Painted Barn

I once tried to light a torch in the dark
From the truck bed full of burning garbage
Picking up a stick, thorns filled my hands
A shriek chilled the air
Apprehended

Several more attempts and I was with a match in hand
Mom threatened me with psychiatry
Lectured me for hours
Reminded me that if you play with fire you wet the bed
She said something was wrong with me
And that I wouldn't want to go therapy
She filled my head with horror stories

Even after fear was placed in my heart
I needed one more attempt
I gathered the matches and kindling
Cambered up the hill where we burned branches on a rock over looking
the holler the night before
Quickly ducking into the barn, I emptied a trough
Filled it with hay and twigs to start
Dropped a paper match
And watched the flames rise
Then the overwhelming smoke

My lungs filled, eyes stung, panic overtook me as I looked for water
I calmed down enough to grab a lid and smother it
I hid the matches in-between the cracks
Planning to come back
Then I remembered Dad accidentally painted the barn in oil thirty years
ago

When I reached home mom greeted me at the door
The smoke from the fire before accounted for my scent
It was a little white lie, and yet she lectured me
To be careful of snakes that bath on the rock because the fire stirs them

Now I'm asking for therapy
Because depression had broken me
I've hidden myself for so long
Afraid that the doctors would label me insane and lock me away
Or worse, say I was perfectly okay
Either way I had to try

So I went to Mom
Because when Dad isn't painting barns he's with friends
And when my baby sister's not at work she's with her rehabilitated meth
head
But mom is always there so I think it's safe

I tell her I need to see a shrink

And mom tells me to pray harder
That therapy is bullshit
It's only a phase that I've had since the sixth grade to college age
I tried to explain that I more then prayed
And I've gotten my answer after more then a decade
That it's a larger leap of faith for me to reach out than to be healed
He's kept me alive this long now he's urging me to live
For me find a person to help him save me
And Mom you used to think there was something wrong with me
Now I tell you there is and you don't listen

So I started to play with fire again
Burning bright red
Redder then my eyes
I wet the bed with blood
Struck my wrist over and over again

Snuffing out the torch God lit
Lungs tighten as if there was smoke
I see snakes crawl from under my bed
It's colder than I imagined
You don't catch me the time it counts
I am the oil-slathered barn
An accident you counted on not catching fire
Embers flying in the air

Veronica Gollihue

Mind

Golden tears shatter like glass,
Blood-soaked rivers flood the grass,
Moss continues to grow on a silent rock.

Frogs croak in rhythm with a singing clock,
Fresh-paved roads become narrow,
Waves crash in like a bloodthirsty arrow.

The sun remains ever benign,
As water erodes this land-soaked shrine,
Bringing harmony and chaos into a single flower bud.

Sprouting from the crackling mud,
Remnants of a city that once existed,
Covered by vines that continually persisted.

Ricocheting stars fly across the milky sky,
Pronouncing a beauty unnatural to the human eye,
Bringing peace to a troubled mind.

As leaves fall one-by-one unconfined,
Sleepless eyes close on this unfolding scene,
Wishing they could one day awake from this dream.





James Mersieria Davidson
Drowning
Acrylic Paint
Honorable Mention

Michael Hutchinson

Her god

My mother was of God
when I, to be honest, was not.
She grew up Pentecostal
and Methodist
and Baptist
and Catholic
and though these share similarities,
a religious home cannot stand
if the mother can't name a foundation.

I broke that foundation,
shaky as it was,
when I confessed my "sins."
There was no preacher,
no altar,
and after that,
no God.

There was a bottle of Devil's Cut
that she bought my Dad for his birthday,
but he was on night shift.
The burn was the closest thing
I'd ever felt to a Holy Ghost.
It sterilized my bones
and picked my brain
and filled my mom's ears with fire.

Now she's in big sky country
where god stands right in front of you.
She wasn't burned that night,
she was baptized,
now she bathes in light.
She swims in darker sunsets
and sits in brighter nights.
She stands in glowing pastures
on foundations of solid stone.

Michael Hutchinson
Sentinel

Bone and nothing are the sentinels here,
dried in the sun, bleached, baking
as hornets build nests in their skulls.
The buzzing keeps them awake.

Some have horns of forking spires
fast on their feet, admittedly weak,
but graceful in skeletal poses.

Some have thick horns, heavy and dry,
empty in eyes, engorged on blue skies,
but slowly majestic are they.

Vacant of horns, still others are,
no less valid, and just as pallid,
but stoic as they watch everything.

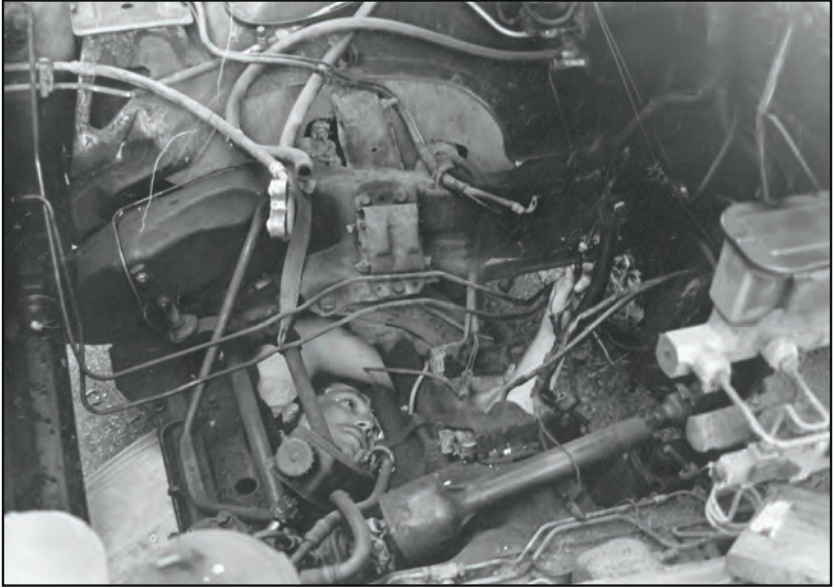
A hornet is perched in the socket of one,
flitting, twitching, feeling the past
that all the sentinels keep in their bones,
watching new storms roll on the horizon.

Michael Hutchinson
On the backs of bulls

I brought a bull back with me after
visiting Montana. His strong back is stacked
With billowed fur and browning bones.
He carries predecessors as
he walks the tarnished plains,
ensuring their survival even
once their bones are bleached.
I cast my rotting teeth away
to prevent my bloody tongue from
carving out a chasm in the hearts of
those I love. The bull confides within me
all the troubles of his past,
haunting me with all these ghosts
so similar to mine. He says,

“Carry them no longer.
Your family lives in dust.
Your shoulders are not made to bear
the weight of living rust.”

How grand to know the bones of bulls
are beneath our aching feet,
and the skies still hold the choices
our children weren't meant to keep.



Samantha Smallwood
Student Lost in Work
Silver Gelatin Print

Michael Jarvi
Burning Bush

A black fire rages between her legs,
the flames running
wild like dark clovers
and the skin beneath slick
like extra virgin olive oil.

I put my ear to the burning bush and
God speaks to me through her lips,
promising a vast expanse of fertile land
wet with milk and smeared with honey
once the blaze has been smothered
by an eggshell gown
and sealed away with cream lingerie
labeled “bride” in gold lace.

Michael Jarvi
Jessica as a Song

The piano is orange
and the drums are big like Texas
and the guitar is water and green apples
and the bass hums like a city
and then drops like panties
and the vocals sound like a whole church
in love with God
and the fiddle plays itself
like a pair of legs crossed
in a fertility clinic lobby.



Taylor Brown
Patience
Digital Photograph

Michael Jarvi

Jessica on a Balcony in Louisville

Shoulders bare,
you stood like a dessert spoon
in your silver dress.
Your hair stirred in the wind
like black fire.

Louisville was blue
and still.
Headlights passed by
like slow lightning.

I joined you outside,
and you pulled the breath
from my mouth
like a chain of scarves.

Michael Jarvi

The Crucifixion

We were eight and it was recess.
Ms. Shreve had told us of the crucifixion
in Bible class,
of a man tacked to a post
like a flyer advertising life insurance,
his blood turned to water
and emptied upon the ground.

We found the water bottle in the garden
outside the cafeteria,
next to a fallen apple and a snakeskin.
Each of us a Judas in the making
(Thomas is the only one who hanged himself),

we kissed the dirty plastic and handed it over
to Sam Wesley. Atop the playset,
he held the bottle in one hand
and a plastic bag in the other.

With the bag raised, he asked,
“What would you have me do with this man?”

“Release him!” we answered.

He tossed the bag to the wind,
free to blow away to another playground,
then lifted the bottle in the air and said,
“And with this one?”

“Crucify! Crucify!” we demanded.

We cast the prisoner to the four square court
and flogged him with jump ropes
until the teachers blew the whistle
meaning five minutes of recess remained.
We crowned our false Messiah with a ring of clovers
and impaled him upon a black iron spire
of the fence separating us from the busy road,
where he could watch us play
outside the church forevermore.



Sarah Lunsford
Haunted Staircase
Soft-Kut Printing Block Using Linoleum Tools

Chelsea Mayse

Delilah.

Delilah dressed in blue ballet shoes, tap-tapping along the yellow brick road to my brain.

That girl could dance her way in the mind, probe it until her hand stretched out from an ear.

Her delicate left hand, that is, bringing the tea to her mouth. It was a strange mouth, really.

All lines and curves and dips.

There was nothing enviable or fleshy about them, as if her lips were drawn onto her body with a shaking hand.

That was Delilah all around.

She was full of dips and squiggly lines. Some masterful piece of artwork unfinished.

There were places where it looked like she had been erased and redrawn:

- her hair with its wild, cherry curls jabbing out like small fingers,
the lines of her dumpy, seagull neck,
and the boulders poking from her hips.

She was not short, not in those stripped stockings.

Delilah, my fondest memory of labor and sin. She was sixteen years of two-week diets, violent drinking, and love songs turned all the way up.

Delilah, tangle of roses and thorns

Delilah, sweeter on the outside, like the coat of a peach turned about, tag sticking up.

She was my one-way ticket to Neverland. To never return to reality.

She would let you stroke her hair like a soft kitten. She would kick her stripes and blue feet to the sky and put on a show. Those stripes were brighter than any other display.

Delilah liked cotton candy and black and white films. She liked to taunt me and she liked to pretend I wasn't worth it. She used to sit on my lap, little hands against my slacks, never lifting her eyes from the screen.

There were many days when I would leave Delilah and wonder if I should never return.

There were so many damn Delilahs in the world.

So many men and women with their own Delilah that I knew I could never shake mine, because Delilah was a plump sunshine on my arctic reality.

I looked up toward the sky and never looked away.

Chelsea Mayse

Salt

the first boy who ever kissed me
asked me if I felt it.

it.

- that loaded word he wielded.

if my lips drip sugar or salt.

his hands obsessed with my skin

fingers enclosed as if it to strangle.

This girl and her bones would not bend to the edges of his earth.

Nothing felt gentle or soft, like kisses might.

The first boy who ever kissed me

got salt in his eyes

salt.

-an answer from a sword I wielded.

Because the grains of the sugar lie deep within my heart

"heart"

-an unexpected place for a boy to look

He only liked the pieces of me he could touch.

And this heart was invisible, like all hearts are.

And I did not wish to see him see me

With those wicked words and eyes.



Gloria Corona-Luna
Bubbly
Silver Gelatin Print

Chelsea Mayse

The Difference

Fact: loving someone who hates themselves is so much like smoking a cigarette.

That same crawling through a vague, dark cave alone- stubbed fingers already burnt out, slowly stretching forward in the dark.

A shadow rising in the distance.

A devil's mirror. The reflection so familiar.

That glass bell gnashing in the gut- blades rooted deep into the body, rose like mountains toward the sky.

And this black blood is shed; A curse, they say, which only doves will carry cure.

they ask, these doves,- "can we drink more water? Less smoke shall surely fill my lungs. This body will no longer reek of death". as if they need it. always more.

Answer: "it has always been there to take. You have breathed its flower in ecstasy. The scent clings to my skin, the earth, the sky, and stains all poetry. Lift your chin. let God spray the fragrance of life that stains your skin until death-that gives birth to freedom of a body chained by L'Heure Bleue.

– the rest of us.

And they drank for years.

The rest of us smother under the weight of this poem- these words carry more water than the sea.

- and we hate and we love but we never know which we do more, a fault line we cannot sever.

We can be different but one, some think. Some know. Some turn away.

Blood smokes blood.

Bodies heat up and grow cold like meat at the feet of winter birds.

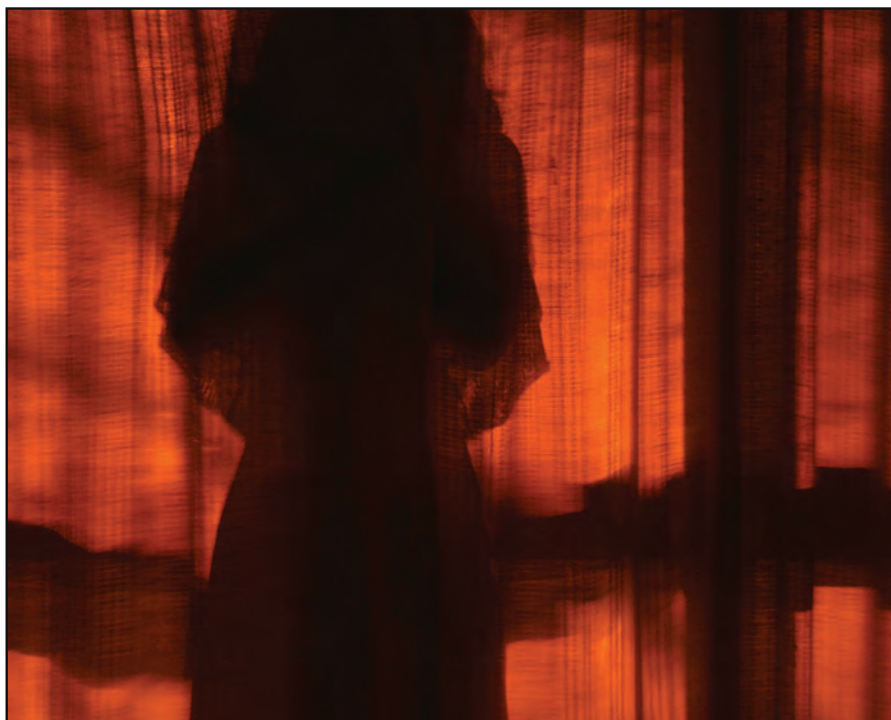
Inhalation is a chore undone.

Nature suffocates your insides; a sort of private ferocity dripping in the veins.

Avram McCarty

Automaton

Bonafide patron of your body
Lips pressed, waxy gasket
A coy mechanism
Silently unlocking your soul
Tired hands warmed
By the heat of clavicle
A blue collar masseuse
Tinkering with your smile
Teeth like nacre
The enamored machinist
Clocks in at your feet
Kissing each fold in skin
Up to neck and doubling back
To ensure regulations
Are met with steadfast conviction
Nares lit up like lucky strikes
High off your vapor
A bouquet of freesia
The air that surrounds
I feel helplessly invested
In every floral indentation
Of bend and pelvic arc
Of crease and forearm curve
I think I love you
Or at least the idea
Of having something
As pleasant, as flawless
As enticing to the senses
As you.



Kristin Busby
Wax and Wane
Digital Photograph

Avram McCarty
Mamihlapinatapei

There she stood—
In the warm light of dawn.
Jacket draping, only one arm in—
She asks me to give her a hand.
I give her two.
She thanks me and we walk away.
I never see her again—
But I know, we were in love.

Kassandra Neltner
La Lágrima

Voy a venir,
cuando no puedas soportarte.
Voy a venir,
cuando tu cuerpo caiga,
debajo del peso del mundo.
Voy a venir,
cuando las rodillas perforen el suelo.
Voy a venir,
cuando todo desaparezca.
Voy a venir,
con Silencio.
Y voy a salir,
llevándome el dolor conmigo.
Voy a escapar de su ojo,
y ponerte un esclavo de la mejilla.
Voy a morir,
como el alma,
y la vida
dentro de ti.

Kassandra Neltner

The Tear

I am going to come,
When you can no longer support yourself
I am going to come,
When your body falls,
Underneath the weight of the world
I am going to come,
When your knees sink into the earth.
I am going to come,
When everything vanishes.
I am going to come,
With Silence.
And I am going to go out,
Carrying the pain with me.
I am going to break away from your eye,
And become a slave to your cheek.
I am going to perish,
Like the soul,
And the life,
Inside of you.



Dakota Johnson

Ascension

Intaglio Print

John Secor

The High Dive

going on twelve I've got to impress
my pubescent friend who is just thirteen

one two three four spring
off the ten-meter board
up into open humid
chlorinated oh so un-
Toronto-like air in
February above the
blue pool – will I hit the
water? falling in space
ten meters per second squared
shshshoooom ! acceleration ! splash !

six years later on a board
ten meters freezes me
all those kids waiting to go
humiliated I
turn and climb
down in shame

John Secor
House for Sale

the key turns in the lock
heavy door with three lancet windows
opens into a cool, quiet cavernous space
empty bookcases and narrow plank hardwood floors
shadows where their paintings opened pastel walls
into landscapes – my sons' new realities

an idle chair here and there
where the clan gathered
memories of kneading dough
two dozen baguettes baking
home brew and stone soup
a dog and two cats at rest up the hill

like a vacated hermit crab shell
it echoes inside – life has moved on
the sea the wind the sand cosset it
leaving salt streaks of sweat and tears
when I hold it to my ear I hear crystalline grains
crashing through the hourglass of time



Kristin Howell
Untitled IV
Archival Pigment Print



Kristin Howell
Untitled VII
Archival Pigment Print

Cailin Wile

kitten, continued

kitten,
they are laughing
and he is standing sidelong, silent,
fingers drumming inside pockets;
(mouths are splitting open,
water dish tongues
slurping laughter into greedy bellies:)
kitten, you are the meal they long to
catch between their jaws,
the fearful rabbit-dinner
who shakes and screams before the
Neck Snap;

even he is laughing
in his silence, the pocket fingers
morse-coding "ha ha ha" inside his jeans.
you, kitten,
are at the center of the scene,
long-eyed and shaking,
baring useless teeth.

you will learn in time
that claws can save you
scrapes, a bruise;
you will be torn between being callous,
shredding up your fears,
and hiding beneath his porch steps,

anger burning hot like lust between your ears.



Lydia Clay
Relationship Abuse
Digital Illustration

Cailin Wile

on leaving and you

i.

i too had heard of icarus drowning.
i too had fluttered waxwing into the sun
and dipped beneath the ocean,
the ache of saltwater streaming down my face

and i, like icarus,
raised one insignificant arm above the tide
and was lost.

ii.

you held my tongue between your teeth
and tripped over an “i love you;”
when you found my body in the waves you said
“waxwing poet, i love you,
but you flutter too frantically
and sadness is no excuse to self-destruct,
poet, you are too much
and too little
all at once.”

(and in an act of pity you
clipped my wings-
“no more sun,
no more sea.”)

iii.

but they grew, like all things do,
and when i choked feathers from my mouth
to tell you i was leaving

you shredded vocal cords with screaming,
gripping both my wrists in your single fist
the other palm working bruises in my hips:
“i hate you more than living
but i love you more than life.
don’t you fucking leave.”

iv.

and you,
that wretched booming
heartbeat machine
with arms that clasped like home,
wound me ever tighter-

and in that thrum thrum thrum
i was encompassed,
a small pebble
dissolving into sand.

Cailin Wile

crossing over, finding love where you began

you cracked my ribcage down its center
and breathed out stars and sky
to fill that rotting-space beneath:
i am pulling my body open piece by piece,
carving places for planets,
pulling gravity against my cheekbones as i
fall asleep;

(i am hanging stars in my eyes
so that when you look at me
i feel a little more like home,)

i come to you with the moon
tucked between my thighs:
you lap her light and go back
lovesick,
i drive away
coughing stardust in my palms,
the wide world stretching out before me
into night;

i believe that we have lived more than one life
in each other's arms
(isn't it funny how you can cut one of us
and both of us will bleed)

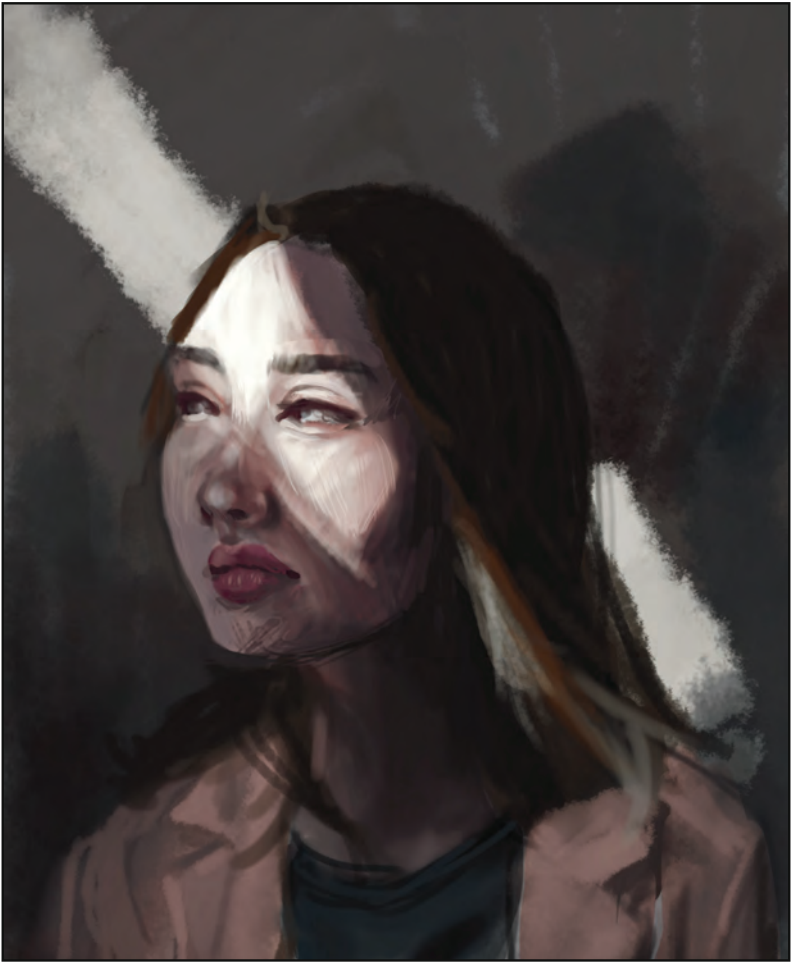
here i am learning which is the best way to love you
and where i can place my fingers to make your body sing,

i am watching your chest rise and fall with aching
as the eyes above you stare you down-
maybe your adoration of the sky is your soul's way of searching
for a god who could hold you in his palm and say
i'm proud,

but even as you stand gasping, heaving with
the silent sobs of awe,
your body is trying to become a universe,
to swell and stretch skin over everything you have ever seen
and could ever love.

(and i am jealous of your sky-
you only see what she offers up to you
from nightspreading palms,
and yet,
you believe in everything good
that she could ever hold.

and god
i want to be your sky,
to wrap my palms against your face
and let you believe
in everything good
that could be in me.)



Lauren Eastep
One Hour Study
Digital Illustration

FICTION

Lee Blevins

Coming Downer

The album was over. The record spun around and around with a minor click at each rotation.

Natalie sat with a quilt draped over her shoulders and her hands wrapped in the edges of it and tugged towards her stomach.

She turned to Matthew. He crouched with his knees pulled up and his feet on the couch, his bare chest covered with a swirling pattern of fine-tip marker lines. The lamp beside the couch floated above his head like a cloud. His eyes were closed tight.

She turned the other way. Trevor looked back at her with big saucer eyes. His hair, still wet from when he had gone out for a cigarette, seemed nearly spiked. He blinked.

"I need to pee," she said and she stood.

She walked unsteadily across the soft carpet, pulling the quilt behind her like a cape. Matthew's family portrait stared towards her with tinted smiles. She let the quilt fall behind her when she reached the hall.

She turned the cool chrome doorknob and pushed forward. Globbs of shadow hung on the painted window. She slid her hand along the wall in search of the light. Flicked it. The bathroom lit up in overexposure.

She drew in a jagged breath.

Natalie turned and closed the bathroom door. She pushed in on the doorknob and locked it. She stared forward at the cream colored paint on the back of the door and debated whether she wanted to look.

She did.

She turned and faced the mirror.

Her eyes were big and her pupils were bigger. Her hair hung reared back like a cat about to hiss. Natalie pulled her dried lips apart with a cottonmouthed smack.

There was still some life to it, she knew, as her head swayed, glitch-like, from side to side. Her vision zoomed in and she placed her hands on the edge of the sink. The veins that ran up to her inner elbow looked blacker than blue.

“I think I’m gonna tell her,” said Trevor, soft, from the other room.

She met her own eyes in contact, her heightened pupils alerted.

“Oh, man,” said Matthew, also audible. “I really don’t think you should.”

Natalie nodded at herself, and, across space and time and one thin wall, towards Matthew.

“When we were back there. Painting you. She looked like a god with her hair in her eyes.”

She pulled a strand of bang back behind her ear.

“Okay but don’t do it like this. Not now. It isn’t fair to put that on her.”

Natalie looked over at the window. The toilet was just out of sight behind the rear wall of the shower.

“If I don’t tell her now, I don’t know if I’ll ever tell her.”

Natalie turned back to the mirror. Her face seemed gaunt now, whitened, like a witch in a storybook.

She heard Matthew say, “Maybe you shouldn’t.”

Natalie pushed off from the sink and stepped back until her back was against the door. The faucet seemed to be shragging now, bowed by some unseen weight. The shadows in the window shifted.

“How loud are we speaking?” asked Trevor.

Natalie closed her eyes. An orange spiral hovered spinning in the splintered void behind her lids. She watched its arms detach and swirl.

“What do you mean?” asked Matthew.

The spiral stuttered and and spun the opposite direction.



Mardy Wells
The Forest
Digital Illustration

“Can you hear people in the bathroom? When you’re in the bathroom? How thick are the walls?”

Natalie opened her eyes again. She realized she didn’t know if she had been breathing. She took in smooth air.

“I usually listen to music when I shit,” said Matthew. “If that’s what you mean.”

Natalie stumbled forward, her feet stamping down on the cold tile. She reached the window and turned towards the toilet. Lurched forward and jabbed down on the handle. It erupted in a groaning, slushing torrent. Natalie reached for the golden knob that locked the window.

The water died down like the end of a sigh. She heard someone knock twice, gentle, at the bathroom door.

“Hey, Natalie,” said Matthew.

She placed both her palms against the bottom window pane and hoped that it wasn’t painted shut. It slid smooth. Night air slipped in against her torso. She raised the bottom until it fit neatly under the top pane.

“How’s it going?”

Natalie swung her right leg out into the darkness, brought her torso down to her knee, and spun her body forward and out. Her left leg got stuck behind her until she shifted. She sat perched in the window facing the line of trees that ringed the creek.

“Did you hear everything we just said?”

Natalie dropped soft into the mud.

She walked, slightly crouched, down the edge of the house. Her feet felt molten in the muddy grass. She peered out around the corner. The porch light was still on. Trevor had left the beach ball on the steps.

Natalie sneaked towards her car and tried the passenger door. It was locked. She went to the driver’s side door and tried to open it, as well. She peered through the narrow window into the backseat. The light from the street lamp lit her spare sandals in orange glow.

She turned. A pair of headlights commandeered her vision from the intersection, bright and searching.

Natalie spun and rushed off the pavement and towards the creek. She jogged down the bank to the hole in the chain link fence. Almost slipped in the mud of the trail, steadied herself against the grass, and crab walked through.

She tiptoed her way down the trail towards the brush and the trees. Turned far to avoid a branch and felt packed ground give way to rocky creek side. She paused there by the trickling waters and tried to pick out which rocks to hop upon.

The creekwater nearly swallowed her right foot. She saw a blast of blue in her peripheral vision and froze. There was nothing in the dark with her, though, nothing but a bull frog on the bank, bellowing.

Natalie made herself move. She found another slimy rock and jumped forward onto the bank. She used her hands to bear her way up the trail until she could stand straight again. Then she started up the far bank towards civilization.

Her head swam as she stepped out onto the rear lot. Some pop song echoed from distant speakers. She thread her way past the dumpsters and down the alley that separated the restaurant and the movie theater. The parking on the other side seemed full enough for a Tuesday night in the summer.

Natalie looked back when she reached the corner. She could barely see Matthew's house past the trees in the creek. The porch light was still on.

She turned out of the alley and under the eaves of the restaurant. There was a man with a pierced septum smoking by the column nearest her. He dropped his gaze towards her bare feet.

"Could I bum one of those?" she asked.

The man nodded. He reached into his faded jean pocket and pulled out a pack of Menthols. He flipped open the lid and extracted a thin, white cigarette. Held it out to her. The sides of his fingers were tough and calloused.



Heather Milby
Cross Lake
Dry Point Print

Natalie, clutching the cigarette like a joint, brought its filter to her lips and left it there. The man stepped forward to light her cigarette. She watched the flame waver and then she closed her eyes and inhaled.

When she opened her eyes again, the man was sliding his lighter back into his pocket. He tapped the ash off his cigarette and asked her, "What are you on?"

Natalie shook her head. She lowered the cigarette and exhaled. The smoke exploded outwards like a water balloon exploding.

"I'll deal with it later," she said, and then she turned and waltzed across the parking lot towards town.



Elyssia Lowe
Out With Smoke
Silver Gelatin Print

Misty Skaggs

The Taste of Caviar

The night couldn't be over soon enough for Skye. Another party with the same old stuffy crowd talking up the same old gossip and telling the same old jokes that weren't funny to begin with. They really were old, too. Literally. Harvey's friends reminded her of being in a room full of pinch-faced high school principals or something. Men old enough to be her father, men who looked at her disapprovingly when they wanted to talk to her about her kids but didn't seem to mind to hit on her on the way to the parking lot. Down deep, she held onto the hope that there was something different about her Harvey, something real underneath the pinch-face he put on for his business cronies and their ol' hag wives and plastic-perfect girlfriends. Harvey was great with her kids, laughing hard with her two boys and taking them on outings to museums or festivals. He treated them like they were his own. But the kids were never invited to parties like this one. And when Harvey got her alone, he told Skye she didn't look old enough to have two half-grown kids. He held her gently like she was still a little girl herself and told her stories about growing up on the farm. Harvey could talk for hours in the dark about his Mommy's cooking or the batch of moonshine he made with his Pap, knowing good and well that his deacon Daddy would never approve. His breath on the nape of her neck warmed her blood. When they were alone together, Harv was like a little boy who knew he was doing something naughty. And Skye was the something naughty. She couldn't figure out why she found him so charming, even though she knew good and well she shouldn't. Skye was picky and popular and drop-dead gorgeous. She could have had her pick of any man in three counties. At least. Everybody thought she swooped in on Harvey on account of his bank account, but she knew it was because she could bring a twinkle back into his pretty eyes. Skye liked to be the spark.

He was married when they met at the country club where she was the hostess. He was married when they got together for the first time at his cozy lakehouse. Harv said over and over how he needed to be discrete. And Skye was ashamed of herself. So for the first couple years,

they were alone together a lot. The lakehouse was their secret place, a place to play house. When they were sneaking around that way, he was at his best. Skye could pretend she'd found a family of her own, handmade.

Once the divorce was final, he couldn't wait to get her out in the open to show off. Peaceful evenings at the lakehouse were forgotten, the boys were banished to a babysitter's house. At these so-called parties, like the one he'd dragged her to tonight, Harv transformed into some mean, bald-headed, beady-eyed, Republican. Someone she would never have let get into her pants. He chuckled with the other old Republicans and she suffered through another evening of fake hospitality and me-first hostesses prancing around obscene homes in a desperate play for praise. Nobody in this circle was really in it to entertain, to socialize, to build up the bonds of community. They all liked to show off. There were always bullshit excuses behind the self-serving soirees. Charity fundraisers or vow renewals or dogs' birthday parties or any equally ridiculous reason for celebration intended to disguise true purpose. Skye caught on quick. Nobody around here gave a fuck about charity. Or each other. The purpose of these get togethers was always showing off and greasing palms.

She had stumbled into some strange world, a place all about the posturing and how deep your pockets could go. Skye chomped down another canape without much delicacy and snatched a glass of champagne floating by on a silver tray as she made her way outside in search of a spot to smoke a cigarette, hoping to find a breath of fresh air that didn't smell like Chanel. She stumbled onto a balcony overlooking a hedge maze and her head reeled. It was all so bizarre. So far from where she'd come from, where lilac bushes grew wild and ungroomed. All she really wanted was to get out of her slinky dress and get the taste of caviar out of her mouth, to disappear in the comfort of jean shorts and s'mores. Her head was spinning and she was surrounded by bushes shaped like dancing elephants. She tipped back the expensive drink and lit a smoke and decided that these people may have money, but they didn't know shit about poison. The people who paid for those dancing elephants were ridiculous. And there wasn't a corner of their massive



Rian Penman
Iris
Cyanotype, Acrylic and Ink

house that wasn't blustering, bragging. The inside was flat-out tacky, too. Ceilings as high as her Daddy's barn loft, but instead of tobacco hanging to cure, there was an honest-to-god crystal chandelier dangling above a spiral staircase, designed to suck up and capture all the sunlight for the rich folks. The windows were shut tight and their lives were climate controlled and there was never an errant breeze blowing by to ruffle napkins or skirts or hair pieces in an unflattering way.

Skye used to love a good party. The kind with a bonfire and a bluegrass band. The kind she was probably missing out on back home tonight. The gossip was right. She had considered marrying up and never having to worry about how the electric bill or college tuitions got paid, but deep down she longed for the noisy brood who brought her up back on that hilltop in Kentucky. She would never get hitched to Harv and move into his prissy, perfectly clean place to play the housewife. She knew it as sure as she knew the familiar burn of smoke filling her lungs. Maybe her kids were a little rowdy, but they sure as hell weren't crystal chandelier level spoiled. And as long as there was breath in her body, they wouldn't be. To her, home had always been a hive, buzzing with activity and humming with dysfunction and love. Harv had the dysfunction down pat, but he could never match up to her in love. She'd give him a week and then she'd pack her shit. Back home, she would give these silly heels to some silly girlfriend. She would sit with her boys around a fire, barefooted and fighting off mosquitoes.

Misty Skaggs

Vegetables

Eve had married the kind of man who painstakingly picked the lettuce and tomato off of his fast food double cheeseburger. He refused lite beer on principal, but never seemed to gain weight. Adam was tall and thin and soft and smart and for him, food was reduced to convenient, familiar fuel that hit his stomach with a solid, bland thump. The airy, open-concept kitchen of their renovated farmhouse was one of her favorite rooms. She painted it bright yellow. She bought kitschy curtains and vintage dishes. She kept it stocked to the brim with healthy snacks. Her kitchen was fresh and light and crisp. Her kitchen was trendy and crunchy and packed with all things organic, things she'd grown herself or swapped for down at the Farmer's Market. Eve's kitchen was a proud, lush place and she wanted to show it off. But not in a snooty way. She wanted people to feel welcome and comfortable, to sit down and let her put on a pot of coffee and gossip for awhile and admire her cream and sugar dishes hand-crafted by local, primitive potters.

Her friends and family loved it, his friends and family loved it, too. Her kitchen was the place to be. They stuck around for dinner and they called her clever and precious and resourceful and hugged her tighter after spending time with her there. Her neighbors dropped by for a snack and told her secrets over tasty, bite-sized short-cakes garnished with strawberries she'd grown on the back porch. She loved every minute of it. Her husband, however, only drifted through on the way to his office or the bedroom or the ratty leather recliner where he liked to sit and read and sometimes sit and drink and stare out over the wild hillsides at the far edge of their property. He seemed to love the house, the land, the quiet. She knew that he loved her. And yet Adam forgot about her kitchen. And it irked her. There was chocolate, soy ice cream that she'd tried to tempt him with nagging her, gathering frost and burning in the back of the freezer. Then he'd come home with super-sized milk shakes in styrofoam cups. There were plenty of tasty, small-batch, home brewed beers lining the neat shelves of her refrigerator, but when he kissed her he often tasted like the High Life.



Bethany Pace
Smoke
Digital Illustration

It had shocked her family that she'd married the kind of man who would eat fast food, period. They were a healthy bunch, prone to hiking on holidays and, honest-to-Goddess, making their own granola. Eve's body was soft but firm and her eating habits were downright rigid. She believed in purity, in the power of a bright red apple, untainted by chemicals and untouched by genetic engineering. How a peach you plucked from a tree your grandmother planted could clear your mind. She believed it and treated the trees right. She despised the thought of the fruit of the earth being tampered with by scientists in some dark, dingy lab somewhere far away from the sunshine. The way she grew up, food was a blessing. It was a responsibility to be tended to and cherished. The garden existed as a holy place. A place to gather the tasty bounty brought on by hard work. It lived and breathed and drank the heavy bursts of Kentucky rain. It was a place where the rich, bottom land sank between bare toes between the rows and you could smell your food, growing.

Adam didn't understand. His head was in the clouds. She told herself it wasn't his fault. He'd never had roots. He was a drifter from a long line of drifters and she'd settled him down successfully. She'd shown him how a country life could suit him just fine. After seven years he still pushed his perfectly cooked vegetables to the side of his plate, but she was determined. Stubbornly naked, except for a ruffly white apron she cinched tight to cling in all the right places. She decided to go old school. A throwback to her Biblical namesake, with a twist. She pulled her cruelty free make-ups from the back of the dusty, nightstand drawer and puckered up for a shade aptly titled Red Delicious. When she heard his hybrid crunching up the gravel drive, she waited patiently and grinned and thought about the simple origin of temptation.

Liana Joy Spurrier
The Anatomy of the Pencil

Underneath, it was just as you'd expect. There were beige curtains over the windows and an aging desk under one. There was a single light in the middle of a white ceiling with one bulb burnt out, and another lamp beside the bed. The bed itself was a twin, tucked neatly into the corner with a table beside it. The tan and blue sheets were perfectly made and it looked as if it had been unused for months. There was an area rug, an exact copy of the light blue walls, creating an island in the middle of an old oak floor. It was just an apartment bedroom.

The little things that sat around the room told another story; hundreds of wadded up pieces of paper surrounding the desk, pencil shaving still hanging in the air like a cloud, the outline of a face almost carved into the top of the desk, a name written all over the walls. This was not the room of a sane person,

The desk alone was a spectacle. Paper after hardly used paper had been crushed into angry balls and flung to the ground. Every single pencil had been worn down to the nub and robbed of its eraser, leaving only the small metal cylinder that once joined wood to rubber and held together a cohesive instrument. The ashes of these pencils remained as the shavings of erasers and scraps of wood that covered the desk, but the pencils themselves had been reduced to nothing more. They lived atop the desk among a few spots of water which smelled of saline and agony; they were tears that engulfed the ashes of a hundred pencils.

Beyond the shavings and bits, there was a subtle shape drawn into the desk; not purposely carved into the wood, but traced so many times that it had been transferred onto the sturdy mahogany, was the outline of a face. It could have been any face, really, but one got the impression that it belonged to someone not quite real. It was the face of someone who was trying to exist, who desperately wanted to be real, but wasn't. The artist needed this person to exist. Whoever they were, they were still waiting beyond the sky for someone to embody them.



Waylan Coffey
Candlewax
Silver Gelatin Print

The person seemed to have a name. All around the room, written in blood, ink, carved out of the plaster walls, was the name Elia. It started small near the desk, neatly written by a pen or something of the sort. As the space was filled, it gradually got larger and more desperate. It covered every exposed wall in jagged, impetuous letters. Lingering in the air even now, one could almost hear an echoed scream, calling the name out in despair to the walls, to the sky, to Elia.

It went without question that this name could only belong to the face etched into the desk. It was the wood, and the sketch was the eraser, both still searching for the elusive metal bracket to hold them together.

Nevertheless, it looked as though that bracket had been crushed by the sharpener already, as the room's inhabitant had clearly gotten very lost in the path of life. One wall was inundated by overlapping sketches of childhood. A faceless baby was being passed between two pairs of arms; a purple bicycle had multiple riders drawn over each other, from a small child to a towering man all on the same seat, all at once yet none at all. There was a small child's leg covered in cuts and bruises, a viciously drawn black shadow with a cardboard crown in the basket of a hot air balloon. They were drawings of people, yet they weren't people. Among the countless figures and humanoid shapes that covered the wall, there was not one single face, nothing that would distinguish one from another. Some were neatly drawn and carefully colored, while others were deliriously scrawled in black or red. Crayons and markers and pens littered the floor beneath the wall, broken and used up, tainted with other colors.

The only untouched surface in the room was the bed. Underneath it, however, was a woman. She was laying down, curled up like a child, in a tattered dress covered in blood and smudges and rips and colored patches. She clutched her knees to her chest so hard she shook from the force of it. Her face was covered by oily strands of pitch black hair, so dark that it seemed to absorb light instead of reflect it. Beside her cheek was a single strand of hair, secured in a perfect braid, that was a different color; it was blue, but it wasn't blue. It was silver, but it wasn't silver. It was somewhere in between the two, some color yet unseen and unnamed.

Out from beneath the bed shone two lights, two eyes wider than the moon and brighter than the sun. They radiated desperation and turmoil more strongly than a smile radiates joy. One who saw them knew immediately that only they could piece back together that which had been torn apart. Those two bright blue orbs were the metal bracket, and it was badly crushed.

Liana Joy Spurrier

Dust

There were three girls. One was tall, one was short, one was in the middle. One was smart, one was dumb, one was mediocre. One was brunette, one was blonde, one was a redhead. One was in love, one was a cynic, one was lonely.

On August 24th, one was killed. One bullet to the head. Her body was never found.

On August 25th, one was killed. One bullet to the chest. Her body was found less than an hour later and her killer sent to prison for life.

On August 26th, the last one locked herself in her house. She pulled the blinds, closed the windows, locked the doors, and never came out. Every Tuesday evening, food from the grocer was left on her doorstep. It was gone by Wednesday morning, but no one ever saw her open the door to get it.

Inside, there was one girl. She was tall. She was smart. She was brunette. She was lonely.

No one knew what else was inside that three story house in the middle of downtown with the barred windows and locked doors. The shingles were white and chipping. The roof was covered in moss and surely leaking. The lawn was overgrown. A light green car with flat tires, covered in rust, sat by the curb. But inside? All they knew was one thing.

She'd been inside for thirty years.



Hanna Mills
Capsized
Cyanotype on Creme Rives BFK

A rich man from Boston moved in hopes of starting a real estate business. He heard stories about Nellie Dawson and her dilapidated house. He saw people putting money in collection plates at the grocer to pay for her food. There was a picture of a young woman on the sign, and he thought she was beautiful. He wanted to meet her.

“Who’s Nellie Dawson?” he asked the grocer one day, soon after he came to town.

“You must be new around here.”

“I only been in town a couple weeks.”

“Figures. They say all towns have some skeletons in the closet; she’s ours.”

“What do you mean?”

“See for yourself,” he said as he handed the man his groceries and turned toward the next customer. The man put a dollar in the collection plate for Nellie Dawson.

In October he decided to drive by her house. It was just as dilapidated as he’d overheard; the shutters were falling off and the shingles chipped. He stopped his car behind the old light green one by the curb and got out. He traipsed through the weeds and overgrown grass toward the front of the house. He walked along it until he found the door, and he knocked on it. He wanted the beautiful girl from the grocer’s sign to answer.

He got silence.

He got back in his heated car and drove away, pondering what the inside of Nellie Dawson’s house could look like.

It was Christmas Eve the next time he thought about her. He was at the grocer, buying a ‘Christmas Feast for One’ TV dinner, when he saw her picture again.

“When does she come out?” He asked the grocer.

“Who?”

“Nellie Dawson.”

“She doesn’t.”

“Then what are you doing with the money you collect?”

“We deliver food.”

“How? If she never comes out.”

“I just leave it on the porch. No one knows how she gets it inside.”

“When?”

“When what?”

“When do you leave it there?”

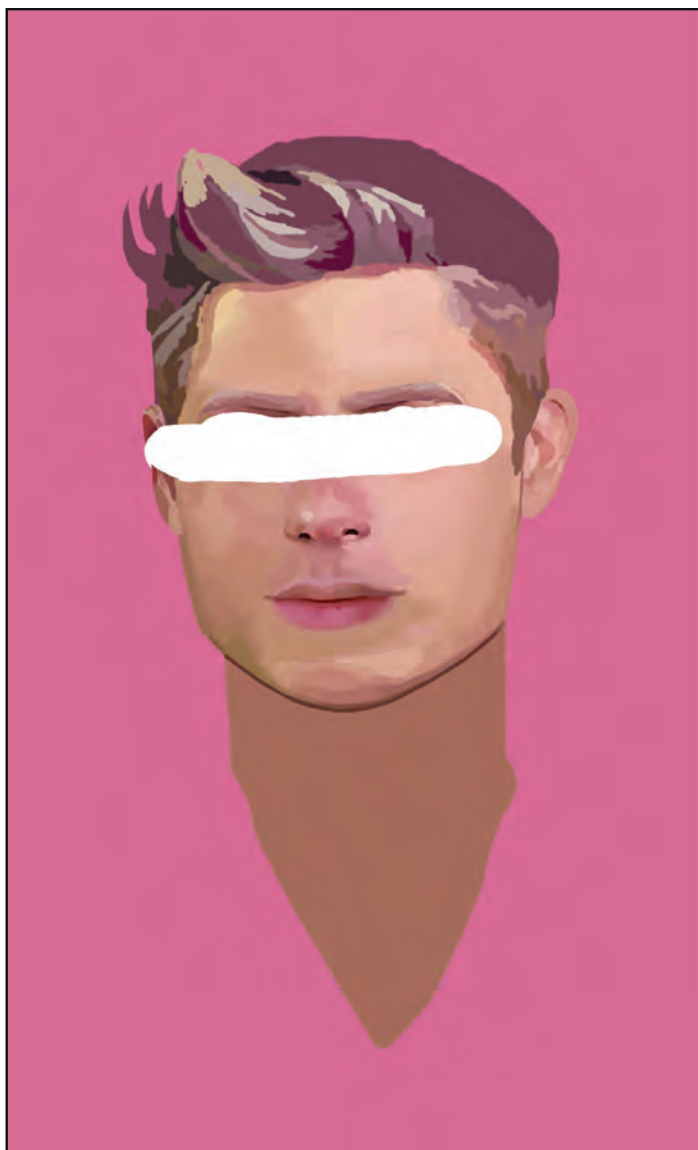
“Tuesday evenings.”

“Thanks.” The man took his groceries and left, leaving ten dollars in the collection plate. He went home and marked a star on every Tuesday of his calendar. He put an extra plate out on the table as he ate dinner and imagined that the beautiful girl was sitting across from him. He talked to her.

The next Tuesday evening he went back to Nellie Dawson’s house. He wore a thick coat and brought a blanket and gloves. He made his way to the porch and found two bags of groceries sitting by the door. He sat down on the cold, cracked concrete and waited. He waited for the lovely Ms. Nellie Dawson to open her door to get the groceries. She’d see him there, waiting, even in the cold, and she’d fall in love instantly. He was sure of it.

Morning came and the door remained firmly closed. There was no sound from inside, no light, no sign of life at all. The groceries were exactly where they had been all night. The man didn’t give up, and he refused to move. He sat there all through the day, watching the door and the groceries like a hawk.

At exactly midnight on Wednesday night, something slid out from underneath the door. The man grabbed it excitedly, prying his frostbitten fingers from the blanket. He pulled it towards him and found two words, not the three he wanted, written on the something. “GO



Dakota Johnson
Emasculation
Digital Painting

AWAY," it read, written messily, and yet with great effort. It didn't appear that Nellie Dawson spent a great amount of time on her penmanship.

The note gave the man an idea. He pulled a small scrap of paper and a pen from his pocket, and he wrote: "I want to meet you. Be back next week." He left the paper on top of one of the grocery bags. He stood up with some difficulty, his body incredibly stiff from the cold, and walked out to his car. As he opened the door, he realized that he'd left his pen on the porch. He went back to get it, but when he got to the porch, both the groceries and the pen were gone.

He went back the next Tuesday. He sat on the porch with his blanket and studied the note she'd slid under the door a week ago. It wasn't written on paper. He didn't know what it was written on. He waited there, staring at the note, until Wednesday at midnight. He counted down the minutes on his watch and thought he'd get another note. He wanted something else from inside the mysterious house of Nellie Dawson.

Midnight came. Midnight went. The man was disappointed.

He sat there for another hour. And another. And at three o' clock, another note slid out from under the door. It was like the last one, messy yet precise, written on the something that wasn't paper. "DON'T MAKE ME TELL YOU AGAIN" it read. The man got out his paper and a new pen, and he wrote: "You are beautiful. I want to come inside. I won't give up." He put his paper on top of one bag, along with the pad of paper. The man left.

He went back the next Tuesday, but he didn't stay. He simply left a note and a pocket watch in one bag. "This watch counts the minutes that I'm alone. It's lonely out here. Let me in."

He got back in his car and drove in circles around the town. He listened to the radio, and every song reminded him of Nellie Dawson.

The next week he slid a note under the door. "You must be lonely, too. We could be lonely together." He stuck the note to a photo of his left eye. He wanted to be able to see through that photograph, to see her move and read his note, to see her auburn hair and long, graceful fingers.

The man went home and laid down in bed. He closed his eyes and tried to see through the photo. It didn't work. That night he dreamed that Nellie Dawson opened her door and let him in, but all he could see was her eye. It was a beautiful eye.

The man went to the grocer again. He didn't buy anything. He walked up to the collection plate and put in a hundred-dollar bill with a note; "Deliver as many roses as this will buy. Print a card to say, 'Next week we'll stop being lonely.'" The man left without anyone seeing that it was him, but many people had read it by nightfall. Who left it? they wondered. What are they doing? What's happening?

The theories varied. Some people thought Nellie Dawson's house wasn't Nellie Dawson's house at all. They said someone had broken in to kill her those thirty years ago, done the job, then stayed to avoid arrest and eat the free food. The murderer had a lover, and that was who wrote the note. Other people thought someone had been entering Nellie Dawson's house. They said someone had been secretly meeting with her, and next week she'd finally come out. They tried to imagine what she'd look like. They wanted to know how she'd survived. They wanted to see the inside of the time-capsule house. They thought that Nellie Dawson would finally give up her thirty-year strike on life.

The man was the only one who wanted to go inside. He didn't want Nellie Dawson to become like the rest of them; he wanted to become like her.

The next week he went back to her porch on Tuesday night with his blanket and black gloves. He sat there until midnight on Wednesday, and that's when another note slid out from the door. It was written on the paper he'd left. "YOU COME IN - NOT YOUR THINGS". The man was excited. He was beyond excitement. He put down his heated blanket and emptied his pockets onto the concrete. He cast them all aside and stood eagerly in front of the door.

Slowly, loudly, dramatically, the door opened. The inside was pitch black. The man just stared.

"Come," said a hiss, "if you're going to." It sounded more like a snake than a woman. With the image from the grocer planted firmly in his

mind, the man walked through the doorway. The door slammed behind him, and he was blinded.

White.

Everything was white.

The walls. The floor. The ceiling. The lights. The chair. The doors. Everything.

He turned around to face the entry door, searching for Nellie Dawson. He heard a different door slam behind him. The man spun around and saw the door as it latched. He ran towards it. He had to see her.

He turned the knob and entered the room, just as a paper-white foot disappeared around a corner. The room was just as white. "Nellie Dawson?" he called.

Faster than he could see, a woman slithered out and pulled his shoulders down to the ground. He reached to stop his fall, and sat on his hands and feet. He was face to face with someone - or rather, something. It used to be a woman. Its eyes were white, with just a single black dot in the middle. Its nose was flattened and misshapen. Its mouth had no lips, just a slot where the mouth should be. It was covered in thin, white, transparent skin. He could see the blood pulsing through its veins, and it wasn't red.

Its blood was black.

"Do not call me that." Its voice was cold and filled with air, exactly like a snake. The thing walked away on elongated arms and shortened legs. The man wanted to scream. - This world shouldn't exist. That thing shouldn't exist. He shouldn't be here. - He couldn't scream. He couldn't even open his mouth.

The man went to stand up. He couldn't. It felt like his hands were cemented to the floor, and he was stuck walking on his hands and feet. The man was terrified. He regretted ever looking at the picture of Nellie Dawson in the grocer.

That girl was long gone, and this thing that was left - it was nothing but a monster. The man was terrified. He wanted to leave, to go back to



Stefany Moran
Sight
Digital Illustration

Boston, to erase this town and this monster and the picture of Nellie Dawson from his mind forever.

He couldn't. He knew that. Hesitantly, the man followed where the thing had appeared to go. He turned a corner and found himself at the bottom of a staircase. There was nowhere he could go but up. The man began to climb. Hand, foot, hand, foot. Hand, foot, hand, foot.

The stairs ended on the second floor. It was just as white, but it was silent. There was no sound of cars rushing by on the road outside. No birds. No people yelling.

Just white. It was a sharp and metallic silence, with a hint of a hiss still lingering in the air. The man felt like he couldn't breathe. The air had been sucked out of the room with the sound and he couldn't breathe. In, out, in, out. It took all of his concentration just to breathe.

In, out, in, out.

In, out, in, out.

In, out, in, out.

There wasn't any left. There wasn't any air left to breathe in. He gasped and coughed and sputtered. His lungs burned. His brain slowed.

His brain stopped.

The white turned black, and for just a second, the man was back in Boston. He was back home, before this nightmare.

He watched as the trees and cars and people slowly faded from his mind, to be replaced by a white. There were no cars. No animals. No trees. No cities. No colors. No sounds. No nothing.

There was white. There was him. And there was her.

No more.

The man kept on crawling, just as he'd been doing his whole life. He crawled to the end of the hallway and pushed open a door. He climbed a shaking spiral staircase up to the top floor. He crawled over to one last door and opened it. He crawled over beside her. He looked where she looked.

There were three black beds. In one was a short girl with blonde hair. In one was a girl with red hair. In the last was a tall girl with brown hair. They were all dead. The first two had a patch of skin missing from their left cheeks, just big enough to write on. The last had no skin. He had a brief flash of a beautiful girl on a sign. The word "Nellie" flashed through his mind. Then it was gone. These three bodies meant nothing to him.

Aren't we beautiful? she thought to him.

Yes, he thought back.

I was in each of us. We killed ourselves to free me.

Oh?

I hid and put a bullet through my head.

That makes sense.

I made a man shoot me. Then the last one stole me from my grave.

That was thoughtful.

And I, I was best. I peeled off my skin. Bit by bit.

How fun!

Yes. I seeped into this world through my cuts and scrapes. And soon I died too.

Good.

But I still wasn't whole.

That's unfortunate.

Yes. Yes it is. We had to cut off parts of ourselves to get you here.

Oh?

We lost our cheeks.

I see that.

I lost my heart.

That must've been hard to get out.

Now you must repay me.

How?

You must lose your body.

But where will I go?

You will come to me. You will be part of me. We will be whole.

That sounds good.

Good.

The man and the three girls became paler and paler. We became dust and rose into the air, swirling throughout the room until all I could see was white.

I was them. We're done now, we thought. We have lived. We have rested. We are done.

There were three girls. One was tall, one was short, one was in the middle. One was smart, one was dumb, one was mediocre. One was brunette, one was blonde, one was a redhead. One was in love, one was a cynic, one was lonely.

We are all white, floating dust.



Larissa Beauchamp
E/Merge 02
Silver Gelatin Print

Liana Joy Spurrier

Sunday

It was a Sunday. When I was little, we always went to church on Sunday. I'd get up early to put on my best dress and let Mom do my hair, waiting what seemed like hours for my turn in the bathroom. Eventually we'd all climb in the car and drive down the street to a big white building with a cross on the roof, where we had all been baptized. Back then, I always thought there would be six of us to crowd into that minivan and argue over the window seat.

My brother caught it first – Ivan, I think. It wasn't even on the news yet, so we all thought it was just a cold when he woke up coughing. We thought it was the flu when he started throwing up, and we thought the doctors could fix him when we brought him to the emergency room because he couldn't move his legs. What we didn't think was that four days after that first cough, he would be dead. The baby was next, but its name has been lost in my memory for a long time. Then Dad, and Mom, and Josephine just a year ago.

Now, sitting on my porch, they all seemed so insignificant. Death surrounded me; corpses lying on the street, no one left to bury them, and mass graves where backyards used to be. Last I heard there were about 1,000 of us still alive in the world, but that was a few weeks ago. The last radio station stopped broadcasting after that, so I supposed there were only a few hundred by now. What are you supposed to do when you're one of the last ones left?

I'd been trying to figure out the answer for months, but I still had no idea. Perhaps you just wait around to die – that's all it seemed like I could do. If not from the disease, then from food poisoning, or starvation. All the houses and stores in the city had been raided long ago, and all I'd had since Tuesday was rotten fruit and bread.

Trying to get my mind off my empty stomach, I stood up and started walking along the cracked asphalt road. It's strange how much noise one's footsteps make when everything else is silent. The thud of my worn out sneakers was the only sound, and it seemed to echo off the crumbling buildings all around me. If not for those buildings, and

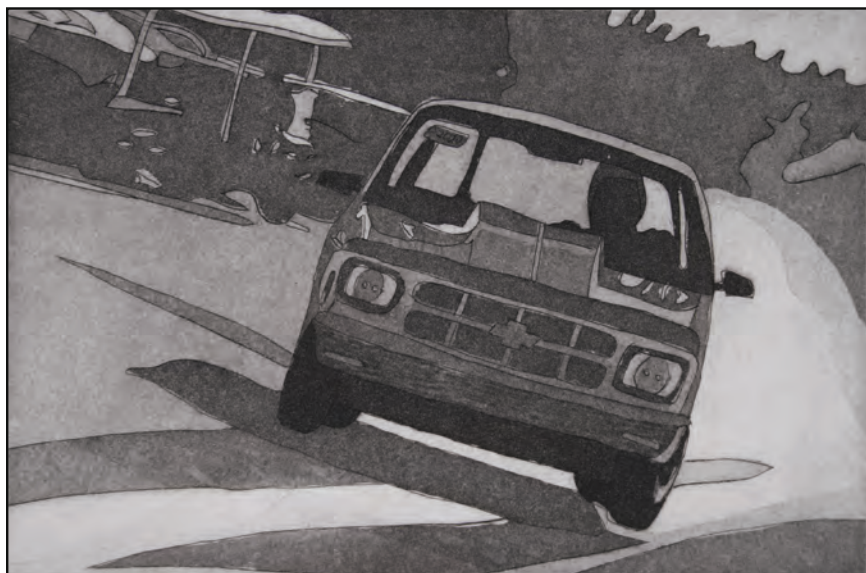
the corpses I had to so gingerly step over, it would have almost seemed as though no one was ever here at all. I suppose the strangest thing was how normal it all seemed; I had almost never known anything but being afraid of your neighbors and standing in mile-long lines for untested vaccines that never worked. I looked back with nostalgia at watching the news every night, making bets with Josephine about what that day's death toll would be. It was, in all honesty, almost impossible to remember when the streets were clean and smooth. The only image I could conjure up of a road unlined with bodies was from the drive to church on Sundays. For some reason, that picture was clear.

I passed by a small house with light blue shingles, now overgrown, but I remembered when my best friend lived there. A few years after it started, I went over for her birthday party. She had been sitting on the front lawn with a couple of other friends when I pulled up, and she started to run to my car to meet me.

Then she coughed, and Mom yanked me back in the car, and we drove back home. Four days later I saw her name in the list of the dead. I think they had just started the mass graves at that point, though I had no idea which one she was in. Alexa? Alexis. That was her name.

I looked up and found that I'd made my way to the church I used to love, now with the paint chipped and the windows broken. I pushed open one of the big wooden doors and stepped inside, immediately struck by how clean it was. There were bodies – plenty of them – but they were all neatly arranged, covered in cloth and blankets, awaiting a burial that would never come. It appeared as though the priest had continued to bury anyone he could, even when the graveyards and churchyards and everywhere in the city was full.

I walked up the black stone stairs and opened a door into the sanctuary. The only corpse there was the priest, draped over the baptismal font and still dressed in the robes he wore at services. As I walked to the place in the pews where we used to sit, I remembered the last Sunday we came, a few years ago. It was the day before Mom caught it, though of course we didn't know that then. Only about half the congregation was left, but everyone came if they could. We all wore face masks and rubber gloves in a futile effort to protect ourselves. No



Kristin Gunn
S1020
Aquatint Print

one shook hands or even looked at each other it seemed. The sermon that day was about how we shouldn't be afraid of death; that we should trust in His plans for us and forgo the face masks and the gloves and the untested vaccines. A few people took off their masks as he talked, but only a few. There were rumors of a cure, a real one, and people had hope that maybe, if they could hold out a few more weeks, they would be safe and humanity would survive. They were only rumors, though. They were only ever rumors.

I looked up at the big wooden cross at the front of the room, and for the first time in over a year, I felt like praying. It somehow felt like the right thing to do, and so I did. I bowed my head in the empty church, in the crumbling city, on the dying – dead – Earth, and prayed to a God I no longer believed in.

And I coughed.

Elizabeth Von Mann

Cramps

By the time even her priest gave her an odd look, Jane knew something was wrong. Her fellow church-goers seemed to buzz and twitter around her. She couldn't shake the feeling it was all directed at her. She squirmed in her pew, keeping her eyes low. Father Tom was preaching his homily. She felt distracted and couldn't concentrate. Her ears perked at the mention of marriage.

"A couple must work together and pray to God, for God will always help them," he spoke, smiling out towards his parishioners.

He was looking at her again! Jane knew it was probably just good old-fashioned catholic guilt getting to her but that couldn't have been a coincidence. Suddenly the hard pew felt far too uncomfortable and she was grateful it was time to get up to receive communion. She slowly walked into the aisle, still disturbed by the homily. As she walked up the aisle to where the priest was standing, the exact spot she and Henry had been married, the unease spread from her chest to her belly. She touched the pain there and glanced down at her hand covering the white fabric of her dress. Could praying to God together really solve the problems? She doubted it. They're problem only existed because of her

She stood in front of the priest, ignoring his inquisitive gaze, her hands stretched out to receive communion. The bread sat on her tongue as she turned away and almost gagged. Had they passed out moldy bread? No one else seemed put off by the taste. It almost seemed they were all looking for her reaction and whispered amongst themselves. She smoothed down the white dress. Perhaps she shouldn't have taken communion today.

Still keeping her head low, she sat down and didn't look up - ignoring the stares at her back for the rest of the service. Walking quickly through the crowd, she tried to make a quiet exit. She wanted to go home. No, she wanted to see Mary-Ann. But she couldn't get away fast enough.

"Jane!" Mrs. Charleston called. "Oh Jane, dear!"



Bethany Crouch
Rebirth
Silver Gelatin Print

Jane stopped in her pursuit of the exit as the old gossip caught up to her. She noticed how everyone around them was pretending not to eavesdrop.

“Hello, Mrs. Charleston. How are you?”

“Mm, yes, yes, well, Jane, dear, I just wanted to give my condolences.”

Jane stared at her. “For what?”

Mrs. Charleston stared back. “Well, dear, I realize if you don’t want it to be advertised just yes and I imagine it’s been a dreadful ordeal, especially since Henry couldn’t work up the gumption to show his face—”

“Henry? What in the world does Henry have to do with anything?”

Mrs. Charleston eyes went wide and she leaned in to whisper quite loudly. “Why, Jane, dear, any simpleton with a brain can figure it out.”

“Figure what out, Mrs. Charleston?”

“Well, dear, you know, the- your-” She sighed. “Well, I’m talking about your divorce, naturally.”

“Divorce?”

“Jane, dear, we aren’t blind.” She pointed to her left hand. “You aren’t wearing your wedding ring.”

Jane stared at the old woman then down at her hand, noticing the naked skin of her ring finger. Where her ring should be was a pale band of skin, almost like it was still there. Around her, the dull roar of the whispers in her ears had dropped down so they could hear her reply. But what could she say? It was true. Jane forgot to wear her wedding ring. She hadn’t even noticed. For God’s sake, she’d looked at her that hand countless times this morning. Shouldn’t a person notice something like that? Shouldn’t it become second nature?

She swallowed and ducked her head down. “You’re overreacting. Nothing is wrong.”

Mrs. Charleston raised her nose, expressing the skepticism of the whispers. “If you say so, dear.”

Jane nodded, as if she believed what she was saying and walked out the door. She told herself she didn't care if they all stared.

She came home to the silence. It had descended on the house a few months ago and hadn't quite managed to blow over. Sometimes Henry would try and break it but Jane preferred the silence to the alternative; forced smiles and conversations. Henry was probably somewhere in the house. She should probably go put on her wedding ring. Instead, she sat down in the living room, angled to look out the window. That's all she did these days during the rare times she came home. Stare out the window and try not to think. About her church or the people there or Henry or this house or-

Especially not about Mary-Ann. And yet sometimes she was all Jane could think about.

The unease hit her belly again. She started, her fingers drifting down to her stomach. She looked down at the pale band on her finger touching her womb and her hand began to shake. She needed to get out of this dress. Pictures and memories blur past her in the hallway as she rushed to the bedroom. Her tracks stopped in the doorway when she spotted Henry in bed. He stirred at the sound of her entering and sat up, blinking blurrily.

"Oh, hey, babe," he said. "Good morning."

"More like afternoon now." She moved towards the closet.

"Oh, is it?" He looked at the clock. "Oh, damn, I missed church."

"Yeah," she said, hesitating for a split second. She peeled off her white dress. "You were up so late for work, I didn't want to wake you."

"It's fine." He said, getting out of bed and stretching. He started to walk towards her and she riffled through the closet faster, trying to find something to put on. "I'll just go to one of the evening masses later this week."

"Okay." He slid up behind her and wrapped his arms around her torso. She did her best not to stiffen, but couldn't stop when his hands stopped to rest on her stomach. Grabbing the first thing she could, she moved away to put it on. She noticed how it took a moment for his



Nicholas Hunt
Wood-fired Vase
Ceramic

arms to fall back to his sides. He sighed and scrubbed a hand through his hair. Jane wanted to feel guiltier but neither of them seemed to be getting what they wanted recently.

She walked into their bathroom. The last few weeks she'd made sure to keep tums and stomach medication in their medicine cabinet at all times. It didn't matter if she watched what she ate, her stomach would cramp all throughout the day. But that was fine. What worried her was how often she kept getting sick, puking all the time, especially in the mornings. She couldn't remember when she had her last period. Her hands shook as she gnawed on a tum. As she closed the cabinet, her eyes landed on her wedding ring. There it was, right in her jewelry disk where she'd left it the night before. Henry asked her so many questions about her sickness, about the silence, about them, about her. She hadn't been able to calm down until she took the damn thing off.

Jane walked out of the bathroom without putting on the ring.

"Are you going somewhere?" Henry asked as she collected her purse. He sat on the bed, hands dangling between his knees. He wore his wedding ring. She wondered if ever took it off. She wondered if he noticed hers missing from her own hand.

"Probably going to run some errands run then see Mary-Ann."

"Oh." He smiled weakly. "Well, tell her I said hi."

"I will." Smiling over her shoulder, she left.

She stood in the local pharmacy, staring at her options. It wasn't like she'd ever needed something like this before. She didn't know what a good option was and what wasn't. Maybe she should have looked up information on the internet. She felt like a young girl again, buying condoms for the first time. Maybe she wouldn't be in this mess if she hadn't slacked in that department. People were beginning to look at her. As casually as possible, she snatched the nearest box and walked to the counter. Keeping her head low, she stood in line. Jane wondered if the bright pink packaging could possibly be anymore flashy.

The woman at the counter smiled as she rung her up. “Good luck.”

Jane blinked at her. This woman thought she wanted positive results from this. Like there could be any positive results from this test. She placed it in her purse, nodding at the cashier without making eye contact.

“Thank you.”

Jane wasn’t surprised when the feeling in her stomach only eased when she walked through the doors of Mary-Ann’s house. It wasn’t a second later that she found herself in Mary-Ann’s arms as her friend’s squeal caught up to Jane’s ears. “I didn’t think you’d be able to make it today!”

Jane smiled, hugging her close. “Surprise.”

“Come on in, I’m just finishing up dinner. Wanna help me set the table?”

“Of course. Is there enough for me too?”

“Always is, sugar.” Mary-Ann winked at her and Jane’s cheeks went warm.

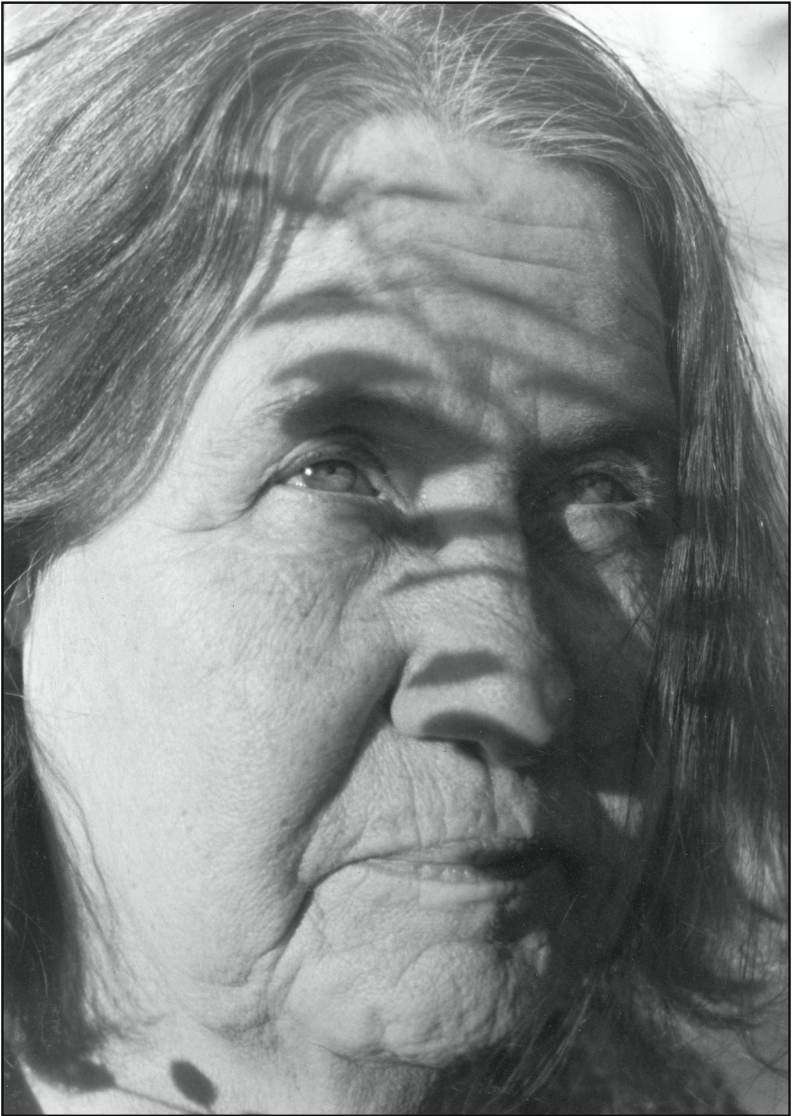
They chatted cheerfully as they moved about each other and sat down for dinner. Jane couldn’t help but sit as close to her she could get. Her best friend was always so warm. It made her always want to be around her, next to her. Jane wished she didn’t think that way. She knew it was wrong, that it had always been wrong. But that didn’t stop her eyes from tracking the way their hands seemed to inch towards each other. Trapped in her own thoughts, it took her a moment to realize Mary-Ann had stopped talking and that she was staring at their hands as well. Jane’s chest kicked up.

“Mary-Ann?”

She lifted her gaze up. “You aren’t wearing your wedding ring.”

She hadn’t been staring at their close hands at all. She’d been staring at that naked band of skin that made the unease come back. Jane snatched her hand off the table, hiding it from both of them.

“Mary-Ann, I-”



Darcy McDaniel
Joyce
Silver Gelatin Print

“Is it because of me?” Jane couldn’t breathe from the way she was looking at her. “Don’t lie to me, Jane. We’ve known each other for years. I know you feel the same way.”

Jane couldn’t take it anymore; she began to sob. Of course she did. But none of that mattered if her suspicion was right. “Mary-Ann,” she said. “Mary-Ann, I think I’m pregnant.”

The silence descended around them and Jane couldn’t stand that it was here, that it had taken over this place too. It was the last thing she wanted, for that god damn silence to invade this amazing world she had with Mary-Ann. Why did she said that? Her appetite gone, she stood up from the table, her back towards Mary-Ann. Jane couldn’t stop crying.

“Jane.” She realized Mary-Ann had broken the silence. “Do you not know for sure?”

She shook her head. “I bought a test on the way over here.”

Mary-Ann took a shaky breath. She stepped towards her and tentatively wiped away the tear tracks on her face, like she was worried Jane wouldn’t want her too close. As if Jane would ever push her away. “You should go take it.”

Panic made her body stiffen and her womb cramped. She shook her head. “I-I can’t.”

“It’ll be okay,” she said. “I’m right here. I won’t leave you.”

Jane looked at her and their gazes met. She’d known this woman for so long. Through all the triumphs and surprises and late night talks and tragedies, Mary-Ann was there. It only made sense for her to be here now. Jane tried to take strength from her as she nodded encouragingly. Taking several deep breaths, Jane nodded and walked towards her purse. Her hands shook as she picked it up and walked to the bathroom, but she managed to follow all the instructions. When she came back out, Mary-Ann was waiting for her on the couch. She sat next to her and without thinking grabbed hold of her hand.

“Everyone at church thinks Henry and I are getting a divorce.”

Mary-Ann’s breath caught but she didn’t look at her. “Are you?”

Jane didn't answer for several seconds. She swore she could hear their hearts beating together. Slowly, she kissed the back of Mary-Ann's hand. Her friend's breath flew out and Mary-Ann finally looked at Jane.

"I've been thinking about it," Jane whispered.

Mary-Ann smiled in the wobbly way she did before she was about to cry. Jane smiled back, but began crying again when reality returned.

"That's why I've been so scared," she said. "I've been so confused with my feelings for you and my relationship with Henry and realizing I might be pregnant."

"I'm right here, Jane." She was crying now too. "And I swear I'm not going anywhere. How could I?"

The timer in the bathroom dinged.

Both of them froze, the sound fading around them. Jane could feel the pain in her stomach again.

"I don't know if I can do this," she said.

"You can," Mary-Ann said. "Whatever that test says it doesn't matter. Come on, we'll go together."

She stood, pulling Jane up as well. Hand in hand, they walked towards the bathroom together. Without looking, Mary-Ann handed the stick to her. Jane took a deep breath. Slowly, she looked down at the test. She began to sob.

"Negative."



Betty Morris
Imprisoned
Digital Photograph

NONFICTION

Tanya Mederos-Coffey

Narrative on Life

Life just seems to be passing us by. Work, eat, sleep, and repeat. Our children are grown now. My husband and I are alone most nights now. We look forward to the random visits from our grandson. We love to hear the pitter-patter of his feet across the hard-wood floor. Tired, we are so tired and weary. We long for retirement, it seems so far away. The hustle and bustle of daily life is so mundane.

— We love just being home, looking out over the tree-covered mountains, especially this time of the year. Fall, our favorite time of the year. We love the changing of the leaves, hearing the birds sing their sweet songs. It seems as though we never get to spend enough time there.

— Time moves so quickly and yet so slowly. Retirement, we dream of the beach. We both grew up in Florida. We miss it sometimes. Kentucky is our home now, twenty-two years in our little rural community. But we yearn for the vacations that take us to our happy place, at least for a time. We love the sound of the ocean and the lull of the waves—particularly at night. We are split, for we love both places. We've lived half our lives in one place and the other half in another. We are drawn to the water.

— Where to go? What to do when retirement finally arrives, dreaming of a motor home, new adventures and the exploration of the unknown. And knowing that home will always be where our hearts are.



Alex Virostko
Focus on Texture
Watercolor

Tanya Mederos-Coffey

Water

The beautiful body of water, the mountains in the background, leaves just starting to turn. There are gray skies today. I'm drawn to the water. I feel at peace around it. The tranquility and calm soothes me. I'm surrounded by all of God's glory. I experience the beauty of nature in all of the sights and sounds that are offered.

I find some time to rest and relax, a time to reflect. I remember visiting this little dock, years ago when my boys were young. I envision that hot summer day as I sit here. They so wanted to jump into that water and swim that day. My boys are all grown now. How time does fly. They too share in my love of nature and the outdoors.

So often, I wish that we could turn back time, go back to when we were younger. We'd share more, do more, give more and love more. But time is fleeting and can't be recaptured, so, for now, I will just sit here and ponder.

Elizabeth Von Mann

A Prayer Circle

I noticed the girl instantly, mainly because she was wearing pants. And I could tell she was a girl, despite her short hair and boyish clothes and the way she tried to swagger like a man. The members of the holiness church noticed her as well and glanced curiously her way as she walked in. Whispers followed her as she sat down on a pew next to who I assumed was her mother. The mother wore a long skirt and hair grown down to her waist and rested her hand on the girl's knee. It appeared to anchor her daughter to the pew. The girl kept raking her hands through her hair and glancing around, shifting often in her seat. As the only other female in the church wearing pants I sympathized with her discomfort. However, I'd come with my friend, Lexi, and her family several times already and everyone here already recognized me.

Besides, it wasn't hard to guess why the girl's mother had brought her here.

The service started with the pastor asking if anyone had something to pray for. A hand shot up and I watched as the mother stood.

"I would like to pray for my daughter," she said, gesturing to the girl, whose head was hung low. She rubbed her palms across her pant legs. "Recently, she's been led astray, dressing and . . . acting differently. I worry for her and hope the Lord will help her and cleanse her of the devil's temptation." With that, she sat down, not looking at her daughter. In fact, except for me, it seemed like no one in the church was, creating a suffocating tension.

The service carried on normally after that. Lexi and I paid little attention, instead whispering and giggling together. Like her mother and the rest of the women, Lexi wore a skirt but never looked quite comfortable in it, always fiddling with the fabric. Whenever I saw her doing it, I would get her to play a hand game with me or crack silly jokes and laugh whenever she did. After awhile, I'd forgotten all about the newcomer from earlier but when Lexi stopped talking I looked to see she was watching her move towards the front of the church house.



Lin-hsiu Huang
Taiwan will Touch Your Heart, Postcard
Digital Illustration

We watched as the mother from earlier led her daughter to where a prayer circle was forming. The girl, not making eye contact with anyone even as the parishioners around her clapped her on the back and welcomed her warmly into the center of the circle, kneeled on the floor.

A strange silence settled between me and Lexi. I shifted, glancing at her. She still had her eyes focused in front of her watching as her mother joined the circle. The girl rose from the floor and tried to leave the center of the circle. She looked pale. It was Lexi's mother, Miss Emily I called her, who stopped her by placing a gentle hand on her shoulder. Miss Emily was smiling at her. Her words seemed to float over the girl, bringing some color back to her cheeks. I recognized the atmosphere around them; Miss Emily had often spoken to me in the same way. She was so kind that it was sometimes hard to say no to her. The girl nodded at Miss Emily and kneeled with her back on the floor.

Lexi's face was smooth as paper but I realized I couldn't read it like I normally could.

"That's awful," I said.

She didn't speak.

"Why are they doing that to her?"

She sighed. Despite being over a year younger than me, our ages suddenly seemed reversed. "You know it's just what they believe, Liz."

"Still-

"I know it sucks but you can't tell them that what they're doing is wrong," she said. "They think they're helping her."

"Have you seen stuff like this before?"

She shook her head. "Not for this kind of thing."

I asked what they were going to do to her. Lexi stiffened, a hard edge dragging in her tone. "Nothing, Liz. They'll just pray for it to be cured, or whatever."

Not wanting to cause a fight, I bit my lip and worried it side to side. I was used to the events that happened at holiness churches, but I hadn't thought to expect this. I felt a cold sweat prickle along the small of my

back as I watched. Lexi took a deep breath and casually shifted away from the crowd like she would to better hold a conversation with me. However, the edgy silence stayed between us and Lexi was fixated on a spot on the far wall. This reaction made sense. After all, we were both the same.

I looked back at the growing group of people. It was odd, watching the way they treated her; not like she was a despicable sinner, but a person with a disease. They treated her like it wasn't her fault she was sick; she just needed to be cured. I could see it in the way they stroked her short hair, laid hands on her shoulders, and cried over the passion of their prayers. God was her doctor and they were her nurses and they were going to cure their patient of her sin. It wasn't the dramatic hate that goes on in movies, but somehow this was worse.

My throat tightened as I watched and dread sank me down into the pew. I couldn't see the girl anymore and that made my panic increase. Their prayers became loud, almost deafening; a good portion of the church had come over to help, including Lexi's father who usually preferred to sit and watch. The girl's mother prayed the loudest. As the noise reached a crescendo, I saw the crowd move.

The girl stood up. She had her head hung low to avoid looking at the leaning bodies and outstretched hands around her. She shook her head. Her mother's shoulders fell. I let out the breath I had been holding and saw Lexi's body sag back into the pew from where she had sat tensed. We watched the daughter walk away from the crowd. I focused on the rips in her jeans so I wouldn't have to look at her face and listen to her mother's sobs. I stared down into my lap at my own jeans and suddenly wished I had worn a skirt.



Daniel Edie
Experience 20
Silver Gelatin Print



Daniel Edie
Experience 21
Silver Gelatin Print

BIOGRAPHIES

Larissa Beauchamp graduated from Morehead State University with a B.A. in Art on December 2016. With a focus in graphic design, she creates illustrations, sequential art and layout designs for a variety of purposes. While photography had been more of a hobby, Beauchamp is working to become proficient in photo manipulation by creating works such as *E/Merge*.

Kassi Brewer is a junior art education major with an art history minor at Morehead State University. Her work generally includes a combination of nature with abstraction, as well as portraiture and animation. Brewer displayed work in the *2016 Sophomore Art Exhibition* and she illustrated a children's book published by MSU's Camden-Carroll Library. She also is an active member of The Artist Collective organization.

Taylor Brown is a sophomore at Morehead State University working toward being admitted into the radiology program. In her piece, *Patience*, Brown was inspired by the ethereal look and nature of Japanese fashion icon named Minori, famous for her "shironuri" movement.

Christopher J. Burton is a convergent media major at Morehead State University who likes to drag his camera to most places he goes. Burton recently had some of his photographs featured in the Tim Faulkner Art Gallery in Louisville, Kentucky, and published in The Morehead News multiple times (images of forest fires, winter storms and floods). Currently, he is working on a general interest zine, *Cavalletto*.

Kristin Busby Kristin Busby is currently completing a B.F.A. in Art at Morehead State University as a W. Paul and Lucille Caudill Little Scholar for the Arts. She is interested in producing time-based and conceptual work, and her current series utilizes both analog and digital media. Her work was published in the 57th and 59th editions of *Inscape* and exhibited in both the St. Vincent's Cathedral in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Busby was honored as the Outstanding Student in Art and Design from her MSU class in 2014, 2016, and 2017. Her interest in arts advocacy and the utilization of the arts for regional development led her to co-establish the Emerging Arts Leaders of Eastern Kentucky, a local network affiliated with Americans for the Arts. Busby was selected as the Student Representative for MSU's 2017 Spring Commencement of the Caudill College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and the College of Education. After graduation, she will intern with the Advancement Department in Special Events at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

M. Anthony C. is an alum of Salt Lake Community College and is majoring in English with a minor in creative writing at Brigham Young University. He has had several pieces (poems and essays) published in *Folio* (SLCC's literary magazine), *Haiku Universe*, *paintedcave.net*, *Sucarnochee Review* and more.

Lydia Clay is an art education major at Morehead State University and a 2016 *Scholastic Silver Key Portfolio Award* winner in studio drawing. Recently completing coursework in foundation courses, Clay created a short film in Animate and a three-dimensional piece that represents her struggle with depression.

Waylan Coffey is completing a double major in art and management at Morehead State University. In three semesters, he has shown work in more than 15 galleries and exhibitions, including a two-person show at the Rowan County Arts Center in Morehead, Kentucky. Coffey displayed work at the 2015 and 2016 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mount Sterling, Kentucky, most

recently winning Second Place for photography. He also displayed his work in the 2015 and 2016 *MAGI* exhibitions in Morehead, Kentucky, and won several awards in his divisions. He was awarded First Place in the MSU senior exhibit, *Bloom*, in 2017. In 2015, Coffey had work accepted into *Inscape* and was awarded both the Outstanding B.F.A. Candidate and Outstanding Senior in Art and Design Awards by MSU's Department of Art and Design.

Bethany Crouch is an art education major at Morehead State University and in her sophomore year. While she has worked in many different forms of media, Crouch's favorite is photography. One of her photographs was displayed in the 2016 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. Crouch also received a Visual Art Award in MSU's Judy Rogers Gender Studies Competition in 2017.

Torianne Crouch is a native of Salt Lick, Kentucky. She is an English education major. Currently, she is working on a host of short stories and poems.

James Mersieria Davidson is an art education major at Morehead State University and has completed coursework in foundation courses including drawing, 2D design and color theory. He is the recipient of MSU's Art Leadership Scholarship and their Outstanding Freshman in Art and Design Award.

Amber Shayde Deaton is from Hazard, Kentucky. She is a creative writing major at Morehead State and aspires to show the love of Jesus through her work.

Lauren Eastep is a junior pursuing a double major in art and biology. She has been published twice in *Inscape* and won a Third Place Award in the 2016 edition. Eastep enjoys illustrating abstract concepts of spirituality by using religious undertones in her work, allowing her to share very personal beliefs in an accessible and personable way. She also hopes to pursue a career in scientific and medical illustration, where she can intermarry her passions for education, scientific study and art.

Daniel Edie is pursuing a B.A. in Art Education and a minor in arts entrepreneurship at Morehead State University. Currently working toward completing his senior year, Edie received an Honorable Mention at the *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. He will begin student teaching in the fall of 2017.

Veronica Gollihue is a graduate student in the secondary English MAT program at Morehead State University. Gollihue has always enjoyed writing poetry, as well as learning about different types of poetry and writing styles. She hopes she can one day bring the same love of poetry and rhyming to her students in her future classroom. This is Gollihue's third submission to *Inscape* and she had three poems previously published in *Inscape* in 2013 and 2014.

Kristin Gunn is a senior at Morehead State University pursuing her B.F.A. in Art Education. She is from Stanton, Kentucky. Gunn is currently working on a large photography project and was published in a Photographer's Forum book, *Best of College and High School Photography*, in 2014.

Kristin Howell completed her B.F.A. in Art at Morehead State University in 2016. She has been photographing a body of work that celebrates the differences in individuals who are different – different in ways such as race, ethnicity and sexuality. Howell displayed work in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, winning First Place in photography (2014) and Second Place in printmaking (2015). She also had artwork published in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 issues of *Inscape*, receiving an Honorable Mention Award in 2014.

Lin-hsiu Huang is a sophomore in the Honors Program at Morehead State University and pursuing a B.A. in Art and a B.S. in Mathematics. She is an Undergraduate Research Fellow; the producer of *Hear Me Roar*, a woman and minority empowering, on-campus, television show; a commission artist for *Give Her Life*, a nonprofit organization

in Pasadena, California; a freelance artist of LINear Design that she started herself; and the design editor for the Academic Honors Students Association's newsletter. Huang is also the recipient of the American Association of University Women's 2016 Cave Run Branch Scholarship, the 2017 Outstanding Junior in Art and Design Award recipient at MSU, and the 2016 Studio Art Award winner for the Judy Rogers' Gender Studies Competition.

Nicholas Hunt is currently a senior at Morehead State University, pursuing a B.F.A. in Art with a focus in ceramics. He won Second Place in the Ceramics and Sculpture category in the 2016 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. Hunt's recent work consists of organic and natural ceramic forms that hold onto the ideas of abstract expressionism through splattering and layered glazing. His work is also meant to be functional, created with the idea of it being used.

Michael Hutchinson is a senior at Morehead State University seeking a BFA in Creative Writing and a B.F.A. in Art and Design. His focuses are in poetry and photography and he hopes to achieve a harmony between them. His search for the form of photography that most accurately represents his poetic background has currently led him to work in large format photography, which he plans to present as his final project for his B.F.A. in Art and Design. His poetry has been published in *Inscape* numerous times and he received the award for Outstanding Student in Creative Writing.

Michael Jarvi is a native of Louisville, Kentucky. He is a creative writing major with a minor in Appalachian studies at Morehead State University. His work has been published in *Inscape*, *Pegasus* and *Word Hotel*. He is currently working on a poetry collection.

Dakota Johnson is a graphic designer and is currently completing his B.F.A. in Art at Morehead State University. In addition to design, he enjoys the art of intaglio printmaking and digital painting. Johnson's design and artwork both share a sense of simplicity and style.

Elyssia Lowe is a senior at Morehead State University and enrolled in the B.F.A. in Art program. Two of her photographs, taken during a 2016 AMI Summer Institute program internship, were published online through Appalshop and the Carnegie Museum of Art's storyboard. The photographs were part of a larger series documenting Lowe's eight-week trip around Appalachia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Currently, the majority of the work she is producing is for her forthcoming B.F.A. exhibit and the Senior Exhibition. The series' focus will be fine art photography.

Sarah Lunsford is a post-baccalaureate art education student at Morehead State University. Currently in her junior year, she is working on several drawing and watercolor projects.

Chelsea Mayse is a native of Morehead, Kentucky, and a student at Morehead State University. She is a creative writing major with an art minor. Her work has been previously published in *Inscape*. She is currently working on a collection of poetry.

Avram McCarty is an alumnus of Morehead State University and resides in Morehead, Kentucky. He is currently in physician's assistant school at the University of Kentucky. He has an extreme passion for people, science and words, hoping someday to be nestled comfortably in between the medical and literary field.

Darcy McDaniel is a sophomore art major at Morehead State University from Hazard, Kentucky. As a senior in high school, McDaniel was awarded MSU's Art Leadership Award and, more recently, she was accepted into their B.F.A. in Art program. She is thankful for the opportunities and experiences MSU has provided her with so far and is excited to see how she grows and improves as an artist in the semesters to come.

Tanya Mederos-Coffey Born in Melbourne, Florida, Mederos-Coffey has lived in Frenchburg, Kentucky, since 1993. She is a Morehead State alumna and teaches English and Spanish at Wolfe County High School in Campton, Kentucky. She is a mother to three boys and enjoys reading, arts and crafts, traveling, camping and spending time with her family.

Heather Milby is a junior art major. Since starting at Morehead State University, Milby has practiced in a variety of different media, with a current focus in ceramics and printmaking.

Hanna Mills graduated from Morehead State University in December 2016 with a B.F.A. in Art. She plans to continue making honest and beautiful art while searching for jobs and applying to graduate schools.

Stefany Moran is an undergraduate in the B.F.A. in Art program with a focus in illustration and graphic design. Along with her pursuit of a career in art, she is also in a band Blindsight Drop. With the knowledge of various digital platforms, Moran designs merchandise and promotional media for said band. Her traditional art is mainly focused around oil, acrylic, hard pastel and pencil.

Betty Morris received her B.F.A. in Art from Morehead State University in December 2016. While a very well-rounded artist, she focuses on graphic design and photography. Aside from clientele work, Morris' work revolves around her life experiences, travels and societal issues. She has received awards for her photography, including the Gateway Regional Arts Center's 2015 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, and the Wilma Grote Symposium for the Advancement of Women. Currently, Morris is working on developing a more cinematic photography style, while also traveling and finding new inspiration for future work.

Kassandra Neltner is a senior biomedical sciences and Spanish double major at Morehead State University.

Bethany Pace is a sophomore in Morehead State University's B.F.A. in Art Education program with a minor in English. She received the MSU Outstanding Freshman in Art and Design Award in the spring of 2016, received an award in textiles at the 2016 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mount Sterling, Kentucky, and a Visual Art Award in MSU's *Judy Rogers Gender Studies Competition* in 2017. Pace is currently focusing on her work with textiles and furthering her general study of proportion and technical ability

Rian Penman is an art major at Morehead State University currently working with experimental photographic processes.

John Secor is a retired associate professor of romance languages from MSU. He has published a volume of French poems with English versions, *Dessert du soir/Evening Sweets* with Pippa Press in Paris, France, and is currently working on a collection in English. He has placed poems in *Inscape* and *Pegasus*. Of particular interest to him is the use of language, image and metaphor to delve into the deep recesses of the mind that open up, as to a spelunker, when the light of the contemporary world shines upon it.

Misty Skaggs is an avid reader and an independent, Appalachian scholar who currently resides out at the end of Bear Town Ridge Road in Elliott County, Kentucky. Her poetry and prose have been published in literary journals such as *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *Still: The Journal*, *New Madrid*, *Kudzu*, *The Pikeville Review* and *Limestone*, as well as extensively online at sites such as Fried Chicken & Coffee, a blogazine for rural literature. Skaggs is currently and compulsively editing a collection of short stories.

Samantha Smallwood is a sophomore art education major at Morehead State University from Pikeville, Kentucky. Smallwood had artwork published and received an Honorable Mention Award in a previous issue of *Inscape*.

Liana Joy Spurrier is a sophomore at Morehead State University. She is majoring in convergent media with minors in marketing and Spanish, though her ultimate goal in life is to be an author. She has recently finished a novel, as well as an illustrated collection of short stories, both of which she plans to self-publish later this year.

Alex Virostko, a sophomore art education major at Morehead State University, is from Ashville, Ohio. Virostko's current focus in art is drawing and watercolor painting.

Elizabeth Von Mann is a native of Richmond, Kentucky. She decided to be a writer at the tender age of 12 when she realized the only thing better than reading books is creating them. She is currently a freshman in the B.F.A. program at Morehead State and is compiling a collection of short stories and poems centered around the bitter sweetness of coming of age.

Mardy Wells is a freshman art major at Morehead State University focusing in studio art but gaining interest in digital art. Several of Wells' artworks have been featured in the Mountain Mushroom Festival art show, winning awards including Best in Show.

Cailin Wile is in her last year at Morehead State University, where she is majoring in French and English. She is an avid reader of poetry, and writes every day. After graduation, she plans to travel and use her experiences traveling as inspiration for her writing.



Inscape is a Morehead State University publication with a long history of cutting edge visual and literary art. Media and genres of work range from prose, poetry, short story, long narrative, non-fiction and creative essays to ceramics, photography, printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture, design and digital art.

The Department of English offers MSU students the opportunity to submit work for publication. Students may submit poetry, fiction, non-fiction, translations or drama. The works are reviewed by a panel and top selections are included in *Inscape*.

The Department of Art and Design offers students two opportunities to have their work juried for publication. For every issue, jurors review the competitive pool of submissions for both the cover design and the visual artwork published within *Inscape*. Their selections help form a unique and diverse issue of *Inscape*.

For specific guidelines and submission dates, visit
www.moreheadstate.edu/inscape.



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